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PAUL GRIFFITHS ON PAUL CELAN

THE EDITORS ON DONALD TRUMP

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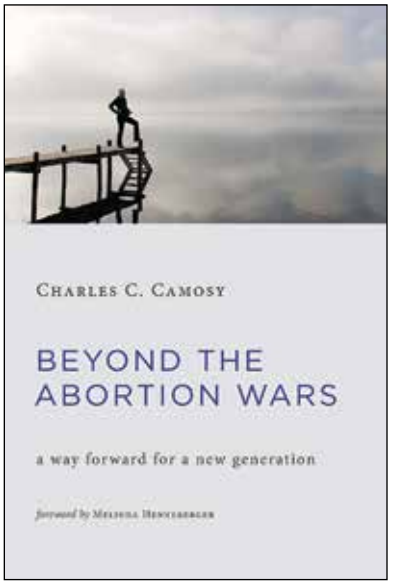
LETTERS

The politics of abortion, the timing of confirmation, etc.

SENSE & SENSIBILITY

This is a brief response to Bernard Prusak's May 15 review of my new book *Beyond the Abortion Wars*. Several claims, unfortunately, do not reflect what I actually wrote. For example, Prusak claims I believe that U.S. abortion law "should exactly mirror the church's moral teaching." But my argument can be (and, in fact, already is) accepted by many non-Catholics. This is a familiar place to be for those with beliefs about, say, human dignity and health care that flow from their theological commitments—but who translate their arguments in favor of universal health care into nontheological terms for those outside the Catholic tradition. Whether the issue is health-care reform or abortion, it is a mistake to describe such an approach as attempting to impose church teaching. Prusak also ignores an entire chapter of the book dedicated to public policy, in which I argue a series of complex prudential judgments are necessary to move from the church's moral claim to enacting a law. Indeed, I highlight Thomas Aquinas's allowance for legal prostitution and use that as a jumping-off point for pages and pages of intense study of various prudential judgments surrounding the move from moral claim to public policy.



Prusak also describes my views on direct and indirect abortion as "sophistry" and "nonsensical." The lack of charity in these words, in addition to being inappropriate for serious exchange, belies the complexity of the ideas. I don't have space to address them here, but part of the problem may be our culture's confusing use of the term "abortion." The word "abort" does not refer to killing; it refers to stopping. One way to abort pregnancy is by aiming at the death of the child; this is a direct abortion, with "direct" referring to the fact that the abortion is intended to kill the child. But in other circumstances the death of the child may be only indirectly related to the abortion. Suppose twenty-three weeks into pregnancy a woman with cancer of the uterus requests a hysterectomy; this abortion of pregnancy does not aim at the death of the child. Indeed, if the child survives the mother is likely overjoyed. These are both abortions, but they are two very different moral acts.

The Planned Parenthood video scandal has created the opportunity for a new conversation on abortion. Let us take care to engage in a way that unpacks the issue's complexity, and leave the uncharitable "us vs. them" polarization behind.

CHARLES CAMOSY
Bronx, N.Y.

THE REVIEWER REPLIES:

Charles Camosy is right that in some circumstances "the death of the child may only be indirectly related to the abortion," as in the standard example of a woman who, while pregnant, has a hysterectomy to save her life from uterine cancer. But he's wrong that the use of drugs like Ella or RU-486 may constitute an indirect abortion, as I explain in my review. The failure to admit complexity lies with him.

BERNARD G. PRUSAK

SIN BY NUMBERS

Cathleen Kaveny's interesting article ("Mercy for the Remarried," August 14),

continued on page 4

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trying to apply the "unit of prosecution" principle to the moral question of continuing in a second marriage brings to mind a similar problem with regard to birth control. Is it better morally for a woman who wants no more children to use birth control (and therefore sin repeatedly) or to have a tubal ligation (sinning only once), seek forgiveness in Confession, and then be able to return to the sacraments, including Communion? A man would have the same option when considering a vasectomy.

ARTHUR FLEMING, M.D.
Pittsburgh, Penn.

PAULINE PRINCIPLE

Regarding Rita Ferrone's "Slap Them Sooner" (July 10): How long must we put up with a separate sacrament of Confirmation wandering around in search of an age and a meaning? Let's begin with some facts. The present Rite of Infant Baptism still contains the remnants of Confirmation in the anointing after the washing of water. The present Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults authorizes both sacraments together administered by the pastor in the Easter Vigil. Many Eastern Rites have always celebrated infant baptism and Confirmation together, more as one sacrament than as two. The Christ dimension (washing) is never separated from the Spirit dimension (anointing). What happened in a small part of Europe (that grew to be the Roman Rite) is the retention of the anointing or confirming to the bishop, a remnant of all of Christian initiation being presided over by the bishop. As jurisdictions grew far beyond the ability of the bishop to confirm the baptism in a timely manner, it was delayed. And so the confirming wandered off all by itself in search of age and meaning. It is connected with the gift of the Spirit, but if the Spirit is not given in baptism, then we have gutted that sacrament.

But what is the proper age for catechesis on Confirmation? I would say grade school, high school, young Catholics, middle-age Catholics, older Catholics. Let us take our lead from St. Paul. He is writing to Christians who have been washed and anointed with the Spirit. Most of his epistles are catechesis on Christian Initiation, how to develop and live out what we have received. If we are not giving this catechesis regularly, we are not preaching the Pauline epistles.

KEN SMITS, OFM CAP.
Fond du Lac, Wis.

HELLO & GOODBYE

Regarding Fr. Nonomen's August 14 column "How to Do a Funeral": His advice for priests to avoid putting their glasses on the casket is a welcome point about respect for the deceased, but what concerns me more are the arbitrary statements of exclusion many celebrants say at funerals. I have been in various parishes where the pastor makes it clear just before Communion that "only baptized Catholics in the state of grace may receive Communion" and that others may come forward "with arms crossed for a blessing" or remain in the pews. Funerals gather many non-Catholics and former Catholics. They should be greeted with compassion, not dismissal from the Lord's table.

DAVID E. PASINSKI
Fayetteville, N.Y.

MISSING PIECE

I applaud Richard Alleva's nuanced review of the emotionally powerful *Amy* (August 14)—yes, I was fan—but there was one glaring omission in his account: her bulimia. At least as striking as her drug and alcohol abuse—even her thirteen-year-old desire to "smoke weed all day"—was the revelation of her binging and purging. It's true that the documentary mentions it early on, and doesn't really return to it. But her mother, to whom Amy admitted her bulimic tendencies, apparently thought the condition was minor and "would pass." Her subsequent recognition that it "doesn't pass," and her failure to act to address it, were jarring to me. Looking at the singer throughout her short life, one can't help thinking bulimia was often or always there.

GARY CIOCCO
Gettysburg, Penn.

From the Editors

Bought & Paid For

Republicans and Democrats could not be further apart on immigration, the Iran deal, taxes, banking reform, Obamacare, and on and on. But mainstream Republicans and Democrats do agree on one thing: the presidential candidacy of billionaire Donald Trump would be a disaster for the GOP. Democrats, of course, are gleeful at the prospect, while Republicans are fretful and at a loss as to how to sideline the fire-breathing New York plutocrat without alienating his base of support among the party's most vociferous partisans.

Many thought the poll-leading Trump had sabotaged his campaign with his blustering performance during and after the August 6 Fox News debate. The questioning from the panel of Fox News correspondents was professional and rigorous, with many of the more pointed challenges directed at the wealthy real-estate developer and reality-TV star. Trump's answers were blunt, boastful, crude, and unresponsive. His insulting and misogynous remarks about Megyn Kelly after the debate were thought to have sealed his fate. Yet his popularity among Republican voters only increased, with many lauding him for scoffing at "political correctness" and exhibiting a putatively manly take-no-prisoners attitude. "Make America Great Again" is Trump's entirely vacuous campaign slogan, but it seems to have touched a raw nerve among older white, male, "low information" voters whose cultural and political resentments the Republican Party has been cultivating for the better part of fifty years. Government doesn't work, they've been told. All politicians are corrupt. A rich businessman is the answer.

Will the Trump moment last? On the one hand, he seems the very embodiment of the American gospel of success. Yet it is hard to believe that his candidacy will hold up under the increased scrutiny that comes with being a front-runner, or that his notoriously mercurial temperament will not betray him at some point. Much of his popularity rests on an absurd and xenophobic plan to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, revoke birthright citizenship, and build a "big beautiful" wall across the Mexico-U.S. border. His fellow Republican candidates have responded to this demagoguery by toughening up their own immigration proposals. Since Hispanic voters are now the fastest-growing segment of the electorate, embracing such policies would seem to be a sure recipe for defeat in a general election. Then there is Trump's approach to military and foreign policy: "We go in, we knock the hell out of them, we take the oil." A sure path to greatness, that.

Radical, populist, and nationalistic political movements are spreading across Europe, spurred by refugee and immigration pressures, the disruption and uncertainties of the globalized economy, and the failure of more traditional political parties to address the anxieties of the citizenry. There is an element of this in the Trump phenomenon. Many have compared Trump's appeal to that of Silvio Berlusconi, the media magnate, gauche libertine, and former Italian prime minister whose outlandish behavior and boasts outdo even Trump's histrionics. Why would those who feel cheated by the political system and who struggle economically rally to the cause of billionaires who claim to have the interests of the average citizen at heart? What is it about the allure and arrogance of wealth that exerts such a pull?

The worship of "success" now seems to transcend all class boundaries in our new gilded age. Economic prerogatives trump nearly every other social or cultural consideration. What were once prized as traditional values that placed family and community before "progress" and profit have become hard to even understand, let alone defend, for many Americans. Commercial imperatives have cheapened both our common life and our politics, and increasingly threaten our capacity for self-government.

Donald Trump preaches an unadulterated version of this materialistic and utilitarian gospel. He never tires of proclaiming how rich ("Very!") and how successful ("Huge!") he is. Politicians, or anyone who questions him, are just "stupid" failures. Money, he has made clear, is the measure of all things. Those who know how to make it also know the secret of how to run a government, shout down the media, and stare down belligerent adversaries here and abroad. Most important, unlike politicians, the rich man is not beholden to anyone or any interest group. In fact, politicians and interest groups are beholden to him. They all take his money.

These are not only vulgar claims, but dangerous nonsense. "The whole case for Christianity," G. K. Chesterton wrote, "is that a man who is dependent upon the luxuries of life is a corrupt man, spiritually corrupt, politically corrupt, financially corrupt." Yes, the rich we will always have with us. But the idea that the rich cannot be bribed because they are rich is not only a fairy tale; it is a heresy. "The fact is, of course, that the rich man is bribed; he has been bribed already," Chesterton insisted. "That is why he is a rich man."

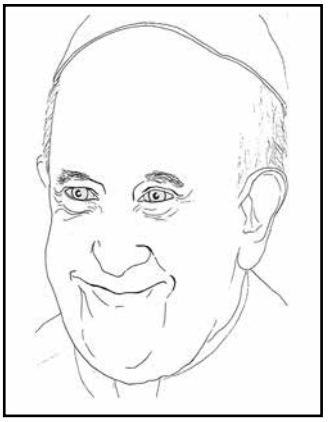
Donald Trump has been bought and paid for many times over, but he's not worth purchasing at any price. ■

August 25, 2015

POPES IN THE CITY

Paul Baumann

Perhaps you've heard that next month Pope Francis is coming to Washington, D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia after he visits Cuba. (What message might the Argentinian pope be sending by first dropping in on those Jesuit-educated Castros? Best not to think about it.) The impending arrival of the papal caravan has excited a good many Catholics (and many others) while increasing the anxiety of those self-anointed "orthodox Catholics" who fear that the Jesuit pope has a leftish agenda up the sleeve of his cassock. For their part, Francis enthusiasts are waxing enthusiastic. Over at the *National Catholic Reporter,* Michael Sean Winters, who to his credit often has sage things to say when it comes to the liberal-conservative divide in the church, began a many-part series titled "Pope Francis Is Coming!" Golly, yes he is, but do we really need the exclamation point? (Winters and I have differed in the past on just how papal-centric Catholics ought to be—see his March 19, 2014, "Contra Baumann on Francis.")



Francis's New York City stop will in fact take place almost fifty years to the day after Pope Paul VI, the first pope to visit the United States, flew in for a tumultuous fourteen-hour stay in October 1965. Like Paul, Francis will address the UN and plead for peace. On that score, the papal agenda, however futile, rarely changes. It is unlikely, however, that Francis will warn the UN delegates that resorting to birth control is "irrational," as Paul did, much to the audience's surprise and befuddlement. One suspects that the "irrational" denial of climate change will be a principal theme, along with the depredations of modern capitalism. Francis's predecessors were also critics of economic inequality. How could they not be with the way the Gospel disconcerts us all by pointing an accusatory finger at those who neglect the poor? Despite the strenuous and well-rewarded efforts of some neoconservative intellectuals, the eye of a needle hasn't gotten any larger. Francis's regard for the poor, much to the discomfort of such folks, does seem to be of a somewhat different intensity than most of those who preceded him in the chair of Peter.

Francis's visit is a big deal, but I doubt "the entire nation is focused" on it, as Winters imagines.

It is safe to say that Paul VI's visit was an even bigger deal. According to news reports, 4 million people turned out to get a glimpse of Paul as his motorcade made its way from Queens to Harlem to the Waldorf Astoria, where he met with President Lyndon Johnson. Few suspected that 1965 would be the high-water mark of institutional Catholicism's power and authority in America, soon to be eroded by the irresistible pressures of assimilation (welcome to the suburbs!) and the novel uncertainties that followed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council's reforms and *Humanae vitae*. Indeed, writing in *Commonweal*, associate editor John Leo noted that the papal Mass at Yankee Stadium "gave many Catholics in the New York area their first look at the modernized liturgy." If only Leo (who evolved into very much a conservative pundit at *U.S. News & World Report*) had known of all the insipid and banal homilies and hymnody about to be unleashed.

Leo's article is an acutely observed piece, both witty and quite measured regarding all the "hoopla" and "euphoria" surrounding the papal visit. "If the cheering was unanimous," Leo wrote, "it was not clear as to exactly what was being cheered." That sort of gentle skepticism seems like the right mix of respectful attention and journalistic wariness. Leo is especially wry about the three television networks' fifteen hours of uninterrupted coverage, a precursor of sorts to today's monomaniacal cable news channels. Even what the pope ate for breakfast that morning in Rome—a sweet roll and coffee—was breathlessly reported. Not surprisingly, Bishop Fulton Sheen served as an official Catholic commentator, in this instance for CBS. (Did he wear his cape?) The pope was flying on TWA, Sheen assured his audience, because the initials stood for "Traveling with Angels." What, Sheen was asked, did he make of the points made in the pope's UN speech? "The Holy Father made seven points, like the seven notes of the octave." This is treacle of rare purity and confidence. Is it any wonder that reruns of Sheen's popular *Life is Worth Living* TV program were long a staple on EWTN? For his part, Leo concluded his assessment of the television coverage by speculating that "while the pope may be invited back, Bishop Sheen will not be."

Leo hoped the evident enthusiasm of the crowds might "reduce the chances of conservatives' being less papal than the pope on liturgical changes and internationalism." Fat chance. He also worried that the attention paid the pope might overshadow the work of the ecumenical council then in its final sessions in Rome. "For many, that will be precisely the problem," Leo wrote.

It remains precisely the problem today, although, to his great credit, this pope clearly wants to discourage any veneration of the papacy. Given the nature of the institution, that will not be much easier than threading the eye of a needle. In the unremitting light of today's even more insatiable media, it is harder now than in 1965 for one man to see, let alone reach out to the "peripheries." But Francis keeps trying, bless him. ■

Paul Baumann *is the editor of* Commonweal. *This article originally appeared on dotCommonweal on August 24.*

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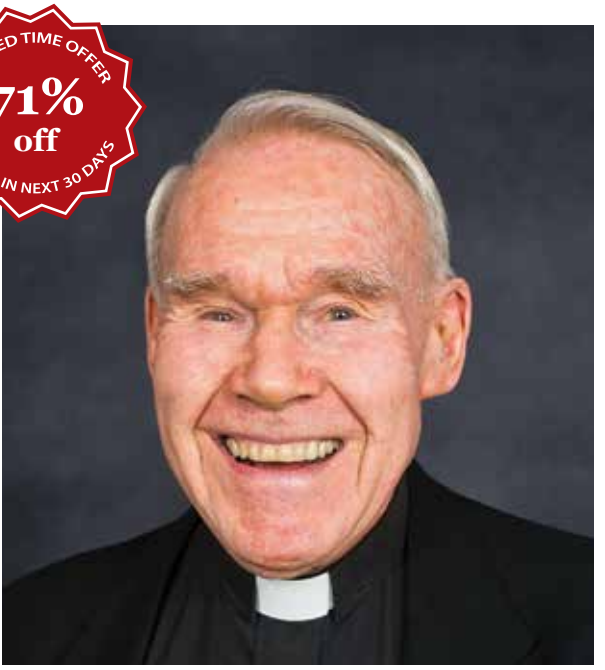

Fr. Joseph J. Feeney, S.J., Ph.D, St. Joseph's University

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Cathleen Kaveny

Bring Back the Gallows?

THE SUPREME COURT'S CRUEL & UNUSUAL RULING

Reading between the lines of the U.S. Supreme Court's majority decision in *Glossip v. Gross*, it would be easy to conclude that the recent spate of botched executions is actually the fault of death-penalty abolitionists.

In *Glossip*, the Supreme Court narrowly held that the three-drug cocktail used to execute prisoners in Oklahoma and several other states did not violate the Eighth Amendment's proscription against cruel and unusual punishment. In so doing, the Court rejected the prisoners' claims that midazolam, the drug first administered during an execution, was not consistently powerful enough to render the condemned insensate to the second drug (which paralyzes the prisoner) and the third drug (which stops the heart). The Court suggested that the choice of sedative was not to blame for Oklahoma's horrific execution of Clayton Lockhart, who woke up moaning in the middle of the process. Instead, the problem was a faulty execution protocol, which has since been corrected by the state.

But that was not the majority opinion's central point. Writing for the Court, Justice Samuel Alito argued that because the death penalty is constitutionally permissible, it must be practically implementable. To succeed in their claims, the prisoners must show that "the risk of severe pain presented by an execution protocol is substantial when compared to the known and available alternatives." The word "available" is key—the Court's aim is to prevent morally motivated market pressures from thwarting a state's right to put criminals to death.

The trouble, from Alito's perspective, is that two alternative drugs widely considered to be preferable to midazolam for use in execution are no longer available—thanks to people who oppose the

death penalty. The original sedative used in the three-drug cocktail was sodium thiopental—a powerful and fast-acting barbiturate. Alito recounts how anti–death penalty activists pressured the only American manufacturer of the drug to cease making it domestically, and to refuse to sell its Italian-made product for use in lethal injections in the United States. In January 2011, the drug company ceased manufacturing sodium thiopental entirely. With the original drug of choice no longer available, capital-punishment states turned to pentobarbital, another barbiturate. That drug was used in all forty-three executions carried out in the United States in 2102. But the same thing happened again. Anti–death penalty advocates successfully lobbied the Dutch manufacturer of the drug to stop selling it for use in executions. With strong barbiturates no longer available, capital-punishment states turned to midazolam, a less powerful sedative in the benzodiazepine family of drugs.

The Court's message to death-penalty abolitionists and to drug companies that refuse to be complicit in capital punishment is clear: They have not stopped executions; they have only made them potentially more gruesome. The Court's threat is also clear: If the manufacturers of midazolam now decide to step aside, the states can always return to the firing squad or the electric chair or even bring back the gallows.

The Court's message must be resisted, because it involves an illegitimate effort to shift moral responsibility. The blame for botched injections falls squarely on the states that impose the death penalty, not upon those who are trying to abolish it. Drug companies that refuse to provide powerful barbiturates for use in capital punishment are not responsible for the state's decision to go ahead with less powerful drugs despite the risks, or even with alternative means of execution if drugs are no longer available. Similarly, medical professionals who give notice of their refusal to oversee an execution on moral grounds are not guilty of what happens in their absence. The state's decision to go ahead with the execution under those circumstances is the determinative factor.

There are important moral debates to be had about what constitutes impermissible complicity with state-sponsored killing. The Catholic tradition considers this question—one of the most difficult in moral theology—under the framework of "cooperation with evil." It requires nuanced moral analysis and fine distinctions, and often generates much disagreement among knowledgeable people of goodwill. For example, we can argue about whether a drug company opposed to capital punishment can rightly take the position that it will provide the sedatives to insure the condemned prisoner will feel no pain, but will not supply the paralytic agent or the heart-stopping dose. Some opponents of the death penalty might accept that reasoning; others might say that even providing the sedatives is too much involvement in the state's machinery of death.

But what we can't reasonably argue about is the moral responsibility for any decision to go forward with an execution. That falls squarely upon the state—not upon those who conscientiously refuse to provide sedatives for such a lethal purpose. ■

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Tom Quigley

Another Pope, a Different Cuba

WHY FRANCIS CAN EXPECT A WARM WELCOME IN HAVANA

It was just a simple announcement. On April 22, Holy See press spokesman Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, revealed that Pope Francis had "decided to pay a visit" to Cuba on his way to the United States in late September. *Pay a visit*. It almost sounded like an afterthought.

Contrast that with the Sturm und Drang that accompanied Pope John Paul II's 1998 visit to Cuba. It was a momentous event, arguably as significant in its time as the Obama-Castro handshake at the Panama Summit of the Americas last April.

At the time of John Paul's visit, I was advising the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops on Latin American issues. My office helped to coordinate events before and during the trip. Several memories from those days stand out. Here's one: As John Paul's plane was approaching José Marti airport that Wednesday, January 21, 1998, ABC News invited me to provide color commentary. I was seated on a large platform in the middle of Havana's Parque Central surrounded by a crowd of several hundred people patiently waiting for something—no one knew quite what—to happen. I had been fitted with a microphone and an earpiece, and was listening to TV journalists chattering on the plane about what was rumored, what was confirmed, and what could be reported. The pope landed, but I was never called on to speak. When the ABC producer came to fetch me, I learned that the story of the day was about someone named Monica Lewinsky. Much of the media headed home.

Prior to John Paul's arrival, no one knew for certain how accommodating the Cuban government would be. The Cuban Interests Section in Washington left little doubt that the visit was initially viewed skeptically by the Cuban government. There were no guarantees about radio and TV coverage, nor was there certainty about venues for the papal events. That everything fell into place during the final days, including full coverage on national TV, ensured that it would be a major moment in Cuban history. (Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio, it's worth noting, accompanied John Paul on his trip to Cuba.)

Pope Benedict XVI made an equally significant visit to Cuba in April 2012. But, while John Paul's visit was met with near universal acclaim in the United States, Benedict wasn't so fortunate. Much of the Cuban-American community, previously dubious of John Paul's meeting with *ese hombre*, Fidel Castro, looked forward to the trip. But, given that John Paul's visit had failed to dislodge the Castro regime, lots of Americans weren't so sure about Benedict's visit, and it received a fair amount of intense and uninformed criticism in the United States.

Francis should fare better. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), of course, deplored Benedict's visit. He and many others on the right are still angry at Obama's handshake with Raúl Castro in Panama, orchestrated in part by Francis, so they can be counted on to "regret" the Cuban visit. But there is every reason to expect Francis will be very well received. He will be facing a Cuba that has changed considerably since the last papal visit. Part of the difference comes from the dramatic shift in the Cuban-U.S. relationship, which Francis himself helped bring about.

Pope Francis meets Cuban President Raúl Castro at the Vatican on May 10.

CNS PHOTO / GREGORIO BORGIA, EPA

Another difference will be that, to the extent that Francis has access to Cuban radio and TV, he will truly be *heard* by the Cuban people. John Paul and Benedict, both elderly and neither an accomplished Spanish speaker, gave marvelous speeches—all worth reading but, at the time, barely heard by the people they had come to visit. Papa Bergoglio will be avidly watched and widely heard.

Another difference between Francis's visit and his predecessors' is the quality of the papal diplomacy with respect to Cuba. The current prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal Beniamino Stella, was nuncio to Cuba from 1992 to '99 and was instrumental in planning the 1998

visit. (Stella, incidentally, was first sent to the diplomatic academy by his bishop at the time, Albino Luciani, who would later become Pope John Paul I.)

What's more, Cardinal Stella was in Cuba last April to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the Holy See. The revolution did not sever ties between Cuba and the Holy See. In fact, the ambassador sent to the Vatican by Castro in 1961, Luis Amado-Blanco, stayed in office so long that he became dean of the diplomatic corps. That reportedly irritated the American representative to the Holy See, who was forced to bring up the rear in formal ceremonies.

The Holy See did downgrade its representation in Havana when the nuncio, Archbishop Luigi Centoz, had to leave after the Cuban government cracked down on the church following the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. For the next dozen years, the Vatican was represented by a chargé d'affaires, Msgr. Cesare Zacchi. He was finally named nuncio in 1974.

On December 29, 2003, the nuncio to Burundi, Irish-born Archbishop Michael Courtney, was murdered as he was about to bring to the European Union damning evidence of crimes committed by the former president of that country. He had just been assigned nuncio to Cuba but, like another man assassinated on December 29, Thomas Becket, Michael Aiden Courtney joined the ranks of murdered archbishops.

The past four nuncios to Cuba, with a single curious exception, are all viewed widely as outstanding diplomats. Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, currently nuncio to Canada, was stationed in Cuba from 2004 until '09. He was succeeded by Archbishop Giovanni Becciu, currently the number two in the Vatican's Secretariat of State. Becciu played a major role in the historic release of prisoners in Cuba, and was brought back to Rome in 2011.

Next came Archbishop Bruno Musaro, the exception, known principally for violating the first law of diplomacy: The only place you can criticize the country you're assigned to is in official dispatches. It seems Musaro was on vacation in his native Italy and preached at an outdoor Mass in the city of Castro Marina. Whether he was aware his homily was being taped is unclear, but his criticism of the Cuban government soon went viral.

The Cuban people, he claimed, were "victims of a socialist dictatorship that has kept them subjugated for the past fifty-six years.... The only hope for a better life is to escape the island.... Only liberty can bring hope to the Cuban people.... I am thankful to the pope for inviting me to this island, and I hope to leave once the socialist regime has disappeared indefinitely." Needless to say, his departure came a bit sooner. Musaro is now nuncio to Egypt.

The present nuncio to Cuba, Archbishop Giorgio Lingua, has just come from his post as nuncio to Iraq and Jordan. Lingua's diplomatic discretion is so legendary that friends have a saying that "Lingua ["the tongue"] doesn't talk." It will be Lingua who will be at the pope's side in Cuba this month.

And then there was the visit that didn't happen. Back in the late 1980s, the church in Cuba had begun to explore the possibility of a papal visit set to coincide with the 1992 *Quinto Centenario*, the fifth centenary of the beginning of the evangelization of the Americas. In June 1989, the Cuban bishops issued a pastoral letter that made reference to *la próxima visita* of the Holy Father, indicating that the government had agreed to a visit. But that year was also the year the Berlin Wall fell, soon followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cuban government was well aware of John Paul's role in ending Communism in Poland. They wanted to keep this Polish troublemaker off their island.

After the Soviet subsidies ended, there were shortages of almost everything. Few leaders could have been less welcome than John Paul. But Castro couldn't just withdraw the invitation, so, in a series of "off the cuff" remarks in Brazil on March 17, 1990, he denounced the Cuban Catholic Church and its bishops, who, he suggested, would rather be in Miami. That did the trick.

Today, Cuba is far from a free and democratic society, but, with a good bit of help from the church it once oppressed, it is getting ever closer. And that will almost certainly count as one of Pope Francis's major accomplishments. ■

Tom Quigley *is a former policy adviser on Latin American, Asian, and Caribbean issues to the U.S. Catholic bishops.*

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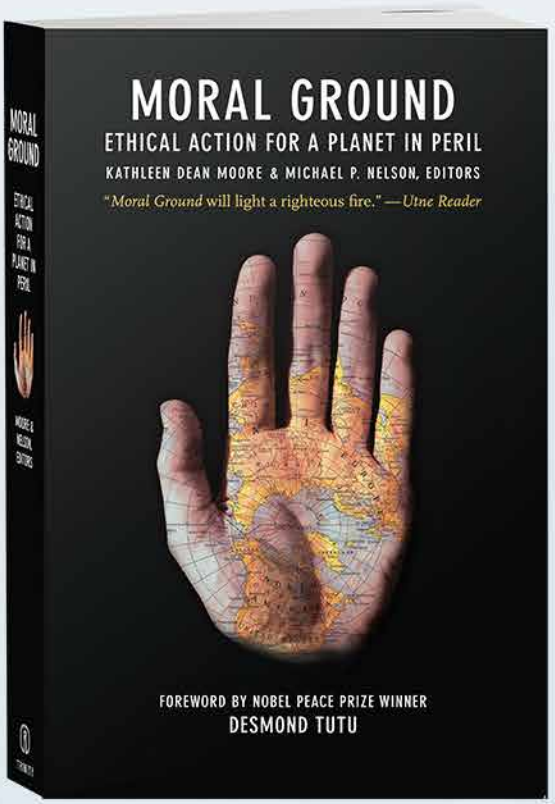

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Rand Richards Cooper

Judgment in Neoprene

POOLSIDE PLURALISM

My wife and daughter and I recently spent two days at the Jersey shore. One afternoon the sun was fiery, the motel pool crowded. One family caught my attention. They were enjoying the pool—at least, Dad and the two little boys were. As they disported themselves, splashing and laughing, Mom was sitting in a chair alongside, looking on with a stony expression. She didn't seem to be having much fun. Maybe it was because she was swathed in neoprene—a black dive suit that covered her from wrists to ankles. Plus a black head scarf covering her head and pulled close around her face.

A Muslim mom, at the swimming pool.

Presumably her outfit was intended to enforce modesty and ward off the intrusive male gaze—yet because of it, I found myself staring. I kept trying to imagine having to cover yourself in thick black foam and a headdress on one of the hottest days of summer, and then look on while the males in your family frolicked, in swim trunks, in the water. It must be pretty awful, I thought. What a poor way to treat women.

Was it? Is it? And who am I to think so? A liberal American in this situation finds himself in a quandary. American liberalism insists on the diplomatic acceptance of cultural difference as a structuring reality of a multicultural society, and proposes the social-work concept of "cultural competence" as a means of fostering it. Yet as I sat at the pool, I could feel these principles clashing in me against the apparently all-but-inexpugnable intuition that covering women in neoprene on a torrid summer day constitutes a subjection of women.

How to square one's commitment to pluralism with one's abiding moral intuitions? These dilemmas have beset Europe, perhaps most notoriously in the controversies surrounding the public wearing of the hijab, a sartorial symbol of Islamic religious affiliation that the French government has taken legal steps to curtail. Such laws are hard to imagine here—partly due to our tradition of preserving religious freedoms, but also because diversity is so basic to American life. One in five of us speaks a language other than English at home. Moreover, we're in an era when the idea of the melting pot has lost its luster, and we want our ingredients to keep their separate flavors. To that end we sponsor workshops in schools and companies, we hire diversity consultants and trainers and deans to spread the message that America's diversity—racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic—is its greatest asset. That it will enrich us all, if only we let it.

My experience tells me that diversity and multiculturalism are trickier than that. In daily life, diversity often means

STEVE EVANS FROM CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

somebody doing something that baffles or annoys you. How can those people treat their dog like that? Why does that family leave all that junk in their yard? What is with that *hair*? My own education in multiculturalism includes five years spent in Germany. Life in another country involves frequent cross-cultural snafus. I recall walking through Frankfurt with a German friend who encountered an old acquaintance. The two chatted, then my friend and I walked on—without my ever being introduced. "You'll never see her again," my friend said when I called her on it, "so why introduce you?" Entirely rational, and yet as an American, when I don't get introduced, I can't help feeling dissed. Don't you see it's rude? I wanted to ask.

It wasn't rude, of course; just different. And the protocols of introduction are a small cultural difference. What about practices you find abhorrent—polygamy or female circumcision, or blood sports with animals, or eating cat brains, or promoting morality through public whippings? There are Asian societies in which women apply burning hot coins to their children's skin to treat certain illnesses. Culture or child abuse? I recall a newspaper photo some years back of Korean demonstrators protesting the visit of Japan's prime minister to a war shrine. Their method of protest was to kneel in a row—then take out cleavers and simultaneously chop off their own little fingers. Diversity

is hard precisely because it's human nature to go around thinking that other people are strange, while your people (friends/ethnic group/social class/religion/nation) are normal. In this way we are all wildly egocentric, Eurocentric, phallocentri...whateverocentric.

And so at the pool I was conducting this running argument with myself. Could I really know whether the Mom in the diver's suit was unhappy? Maybe that wasn't a "stony" expression at all. And could I really base fundamental judgments on mere clothing? Cultural competence proponents point out that we tend to focus on the superficial, visible expressions of culture, the so-called five F's—food, fashion, festivals, folklore, and flags—while missing aspects of "deep culture" such as concepts of self and personal space; religious rituals and views; approaches to problem solving and to interpersonal relationships and personal discipline; and so on. Was I just being culturally incompetent?

On the other hand, what I have read about the status of women in Islamic theocracies such as, say, Saudi Arabia, where they can't drive, can't vote, and so on, appalls me; and the full-body cloaking seems both an expression and a means of enforcing these invidious gender distinctions. However I might talk myself around it, my thoughts—my gut feelings—drifted back to this fundamental judgment.

To shed some light I returned to Isaiah Berlin, that great articulator and champion of pluralism. In the opening essay of his 1990 book, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, Berlin recounts how reading Machiavelli "planted in my mind the realization, which came as something of a shock, that not all the supreme values pursued by mankind now and in the past were necessarily compatible with one another." In Vico and Herder he found this thought carried one big step further, to "what I should describe as pluralism—that is, the conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational... capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other."

The coexistence of such different ends, Berlin observed, all but guarantees conflict, since values "can be incompatible between cultures, or groups in the same culture, or between you and me." Individuals or groups will not abandon their particular views of the true and the good, nor should they; and so conflicts in values are "an intrinsic, irremovable element in human life." "But the collisions, even if they cannot be avoided, can be softened," he wrote. Compromise; the balancing of claims; the attempt to see the other position whole, and not in pieces; the willingness not to "dramatize the incompatibility of values," but to point to where people in different societies do in fact agree about what is right and wrong. "Of course social or political collisions will take place," Berlin acknowledged. "Yet they can, I believe, be minimized by promoting and preserving an uneasy equilibrium, which is constantly threatened and in constant need of repair—that alone, I repeat, is the precondition for decent societies and morally acceptable behavior, otherwise we are bound to lose our way." And, he added, "a certain humility in these matters is very necessary."

An uneasy equilibrium, in constant need of repair and demanding a certain humility: that seems right for how we go about reckoning with what Berlin calls "worlds [and] outlooks very remote from our own." I confess that I find it confounding at times. Not in the abstract, but in the particular—in the reality, say, of a woman in neoprene on a hot day. It is disconcerting not to know what you really believe—or rather, perhaps, how you should think about what you believe. I find this much ambivalence highly uncomfortable. But I guess that's what Berlin was saying. ■

Rand Richards Cooper *is one of* Commonweal*'s film critics. He is the author of two works of fiction,* The Last to Go *and* Big as Life.

GUNFLINT LAKE: SUNSET

"the truth is the light and light is the truth"
from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

A fiery sun
made a path toward us
on the rippled water
and scattered pink shavings
over the rest.

Night was falling.
Our differences encircled
us and a chill air.

But the light. It gathered us
at the edge of the lake,
and we stood.
We were pilgrims of the light.

— Franco Pagnucci

Franco Pagnucci, emeritus professor of English at University of Wisconsin-Platteville, has published a chapbook, two short poetry anthologies and five books of poetry, the most recents: Tracks on Damp Sand *and* Breath of the Onion—Italian-American Anecdotes. *His essays have appeared in the* Christian Science Monitor *and* Commonweal. *His poetry is included in* News of the Universe, American Voices, *and* Best American Poetry, 1999.

Benjamin F. Carlson

Village Theists

THE RURAL ROOTS OF CHINESE CATHOLICISM

When we turned onto a dirt road leading into the village, our hearts filled with excitement. On the right, terraced cliffs of yellow loess were dotted with cave homes. Below us stretched a green carpet of young wheat and cabbage. Above every doorframe were pasted new paper couplets. Here, we felt, was everything we'd been looking for. Here at last, in China's north-central Shaanxi Province six hundred miles from Beijing, was traditional China.

Our hosts, a couple we'd met selling paper lanterns in the town square of nearby Fengxiang, welcomed us into their courtyard home. In minutes they'd brought out bowls of homemade *qishan mian*, sour-hot noodles. Conversation was halting; we talked about why we'd come all the way out to central Shaanxi for Lunar New Year; we tried to explain that, living in Beijing, we wanted to see old China, the heart of its folkways, before it disappeared. China was urbanizing, and villages were emptying out across the country. They nodded. My wife mentioned my father was a Lutheran minister, a reliable way to spark interest in China. They nodded again. The silence lengthened. Suddenly, the little girl—silent till then—ran across the room.

"Our village has a church," she said eagerly. "Do you want to see it?"

Surprised, we went outside and followed the girl down a narrow path. On either side were slumped brick buildings. Now close enough to read the paper couplets on the lintels and doors, we saw most also had a picture of Jesus on the cross.

"Is everyone here Catholic?"

"Mostly."

Up a little slope stood a beautiful, if ramshackle, church, repaired lightly since it was built in the 1930s. The concrete walls were darkened and crumbling, but it was still in use. As soon as we entered the churchyard a woman appeared to unlock the door. Inside there were pews and paintings and hymnals with simplified music notation. At the front was a little drum set. It was nearly the size of my father's church, which seemed huge in a town that had only a few hundred residents. The woman, however, looked embarrassed.

"You should go to see the church outside of town," she said, handing us pamphlets. "That's the big one."

In our search for "old" China, I had never expected to find a Catholic church. But I should not have been surprised. The countryside is not only the bedrock of Chinese traditions, but also the bedrock of Chinese Catholicism. The majority of China's 113 dioceses were founded around small, provincial cities. During the Maoist era, when churches were converted to factories or restaurants, rural Catholic families quietly kept the faith. In a tiny town in Yunnan, I once met a Tibetan Catholic whose family still made wine from the grapes planted by a missionary over a century ago.

The church's deep roots in rural areas has long been a source of strength. But it is also increasingly a weakness as China races to urbanize, leaving such communities hollow shells. Outside the Lunar New Year holiday, the village we

CNS PHOTO / WU HONG, EPA

A Chinese Catholic carries a crucifix during a pilgrimage in the Shaanxi province of China.

visited was full of the elderly and the schoolchildren they cared for while their parents worked in the cities. All the young people of working age had moved away. The government seeks to accelerate this trend, making urbanization a national priority—at a cost of up to $6.8 trillion—in the hope of stimulating economic growth.

According to the church's own data, the diocese of Fengxiang—which includes the village we visited—has twenty thousand members, thirty-eight priests, sixty religious sisters, and forty-six churches. While the statistics sound impressive, they mask a certain stagnation. Protestant Christianity has grown rapidly in China, while Catholicism has not; the percentage of the population that was Catholic was higher in 1949 (roughly 1 percent) than it is today. The Catholic population of Shaanxi province—for a time the Vatican's stronghold in China—is the same today (300,000) as it was a century ago. And the aging of the countryside means that Catholic villages may soon be under threat of extinction.

There are other challenges facing Catholics in China. The country's 12 million believers are divided. Roughly half are connected to the state-approved Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which argues for a church independent from Rome. Roughly half belong to illegal "underground" churches loyal to the Vatican. For years, the Fengxiang Diocese was the only diocese in China that was entirely underground, leading to the arrests of many clergy and the shutting of a monastery and two convents in 2001.

The government's uneasy tolerance of religion still has lapses. In 2014, officials forcibly removed the crosses from four hundred churches in Eastern China and thirty-five to forty churches were destroyed. At the end of the year, a university in Shaanxi's capital banned student celebrations of Christmas, while people circulated slogans saying students should worship Mao Zedong, and "fight against foreign religions."

In such conditions, it is not surprising that China under Xi Jinping has shown little interest in improving ties with the Vatican. Despite overtures from Pope Francis (he gave blessings to China and sent Xi Jinping his "best wishes" while flying over the country), Beijing's public statements have remained chilly. A Vatican proposal to ordain bishops in China along the "Vietnam model," with cooperation between the two sides on selecting candidates, was rebuffed. A foreign ministry spokesman simply repeated that Rome must first accept the "reality of Catholics in China" being under the government's control.

Yet there are some signs of a possible thaw. Last month, the country's first new bishop in three years was ordained in Anyang, an ancient capital of China. The consecration of Bishop Joseph Zhang Yinlin, the Vatican's desired candidate, marked a rare moment of agreement between Beijing and the Vatican on the selection of a candidate.

Still, even if Catholicism continues to face challenges on many fronts in China, the church's long survival in the countryside despite waves of persecution can be a source of hope. From the Boxer Rebellion to the Cultural Revolution, adversity has always strengthened the faith of believers. One can hope that those who remain will continue to find a way. ■

Benjamin F. Carlson *is the senior correspondent for* GlobalPost *in Beijing.*

Hungry for Souls

Was Junípero Serra a Saint?

Gregory Orfalea

In 1988, John Paul II beatified Junípero Serra (1713–1784), the Franciscan friar who founded California. Given the treatment of Native Americans under colonialism, some have questioned Serra's prospective sainthood. On an episode of *Firing Line* in 1989, William F. Buckley Jr. hosted a discussion of the merits of the case. The exchange was predictably lively. One guest was Edward Castillo, a Cahuilla-Luiseño professor of Native American Studies at Sonoma State University, and a Serra critic. The other, Fr. Noel Moholy, was vice-postulator for the Serra cause. Buckley began by asking Castillo if he was "protesting the canonization of Junípero Serra in your capacity as a Christian or merely in your capacity as a Californian, or both?" Castillo, who had participated in the Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969, declared himself "a pagan." To which Buckley responded, "But as the lawyers put it, you really have no standing, do you? That is to say, it's none of your business who the church canonizes."

Noel Moholy, who must have watched that exchange with a mixture of apprehension and bemusement, put it succinctly: "Now, the question before the house is not canonizing the mission system. The question is about this individual: What kind of life did he lead?"

To some, that complicated and arduous life seems beside the point. Last January, shortly after Pope Francis's surprising announcement that he would canonize Serra during his visit to the United States this month, a statue of Christ in a cemetery at Mission San Gabriel in Los Angeles was toppled, its head and arms removed, and a cross smashed at another grave. A MoveOn.org petition, which is supposedly signed by "descendants of California mission Indians," seeks to "enlighten" the pope about "the deception, exploitation, oppression, enslavement, and genocide" of California natives. And that's just for starters.

Yet José Gómez, the archbishop of Los Angeles, sees Serra as an ally of those who defended the indigenous peoples against Spain's early violence, but with a difference. "Fr. Serra never delivered fiery sermons like [Antonio] de Montesinos," Gómez says. "He never engaged in theological and moral debates in the royal courts, as [Bartolomé] las Casas did. One way to think about him is that he was kind of a 'working class' missionary—a guy who tried to get things done."

So who, exactly, was Fr. Junípero Serra? Why are some people angry about his canonization? And finally, why did Pope Francis take a stalled sainthood case, dispense with the need for a second miracle, and not only make Serra the first Hispanic saint in the United States (and the first who worked primarily in the American West), but make himself the first pope to canonize a saint on U.S. soil? (The canonization will take place on September 23 at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.).

Serra is virtually a household name in California, where all fourth-graders are required to study him and the missions. Mention his name in the East, however, and people usually draw a blank. This may have something to do with the Anglocentric narrative told about the birth of this country. But the Spaniards were here first, by almost a century.

Junípero was born Miguel José Serre on the island of Mallorca off the northeast coast of Spain. Taking the name of St. Francis's sidekick, Miguel became a Franciscan priest as Junípero. Like many Franciscans, he was a disciplinarian and a vigorous practitioner of self-mortification. He was also an accomplished academic, rising to a chair in theology at Mallorca's Llullian University. Discerning a vocation to missionary work in middle age, he arrived in the New World in 1749. On a legendary first walk—from Veracruz to Mexico City—he was bitten by a venomous spider that caused him leg pain for the rest of his life. Before being sent to California, he spent eighteen years toiling with the Pames Indians in the Sierra Gorda of Mexico, and on missionary trips almost as far south as the Yucatan. Then in 1768 he was sent to Baja California, and the following year into what is now the state of California. The Spanish monarchy was eager to protect its trade routes between the Philippines and Mexico by securing California's harbors from the encroaching Russians in the north. But Serra was eager for souls. Over the next fifteen years, he founded nine of twenty-one missions along the Pacific coast. He baptized or confirmed six thousand Indians himself (over eighty thousand California

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A portrait of Blessed Junípero Serra sits above his tomb in San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo Mission in Carmel, California.

CNS PHOTO / NANCY WIECHEC

Indians were ultimately baptized by the early Franciscans), dying at Carmel, his home mission, in 1784.

Six hundred Indians were said to have wept at Serra's funeral, piling his bier high with wildflowers. Perhaps this is not surprising, for Serra could be a fierce critic of the Spanish colonists and a staunch defender of the Indians. Writing to the Spanish viceroy in Mexico City demanding the removal of a military commander, he was graphic in his outrage: "The soldiers, clever as they are at lassoing cows and mules, catch an Indian with their lassos to become prey for their unbridled lust. At times some Indian men would try and defend their wives, only to be shot down with bullets."

Contrary to some contemporary claims, the testimonies gathered sixty-six years ago in making the case for Serra's sainthood give unmistakable, consistent, and concrete evidence of Indian reverence toward the Franciscan. The current debate, suggests Fr. Henry Sands, a Native American and director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Cultural Diversity, is filled with "overblown and incorrect" information about Serra's character and life. To be sure, given the tragedy that engulfed the native population after the arrival of the Spaniards and then the Anglos, skepticism about the motives and actions of missionaries like Serra is warranted. "There is so much that has been done in the past, and to the present day, that is wrong," said Sands at a 2015 conference on America's "Founding Padres." But Serra, although implicated in that tragedy, was never an advocate or a perpetrator of those crimes.

Perhaps a brief summary of what happened to the Indians of the Americas is in order. What one historian has called the first "world war" is also certainly the original sin of the nation. No Catholic, no Christian, can explain it away.

During the French and Indian War of the 1760s, the British officer Sir Jeffrey Amherst suggested to his officers that they "Inoculate the Indians [with smallpox] by means of Blankets, as well as to Try Every Other Method, that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race." In 1763, at Ft. Pitt (today's Pittsburgh), a fellow named William Trent gave "two Blankets and a Handkerchief out of the Smallpox Hospital" to two Delaware Indians. Soon the Delaware were overwhelmed by smallpox. In the following century at least forty smallpox and measles epidemics would ravage the native population.

Although disease was responsible for the vast majority of Indian deaths, American violence was pervasive as well. Some of the most egregious incidents are well known, often tied to prospecting for gold. At Sand Creek during the Colorado gold rush of 1859, Col. John Chivington bragged of killing five hundred Cheyenne Indians. At Wounded Knee in 1889, three hundred Indians, mostly women and children, were massacred by U.S. troops and dumped into a ditch. During the Modoc War of 1872, the last stand for California's native peoples after the gold rush, white Americans briskly pursued the goal announced by Peter Burnett, the state's first governor: "It is inevitable the Indian must go."

By the time Nez Perce Chief Joseph ("I will fight no more forever") died in 1904 of what the reservation doctor called "a broken heart," the population of Indians in the United States was about 250,000. If we accept historian William E. Denevan's estimate that there were 3.8 million natives in what is now the United States and Canada when the Europeans arrived on the continent, that makes a decline of 93 percent (see Denevan's *The Native American Population of the Americas in 1492*).

There is no evidence that Serra was complicit in any such

A woodcut published in 1787 with the first biography of Blessed Junípero Serra

CNS PHOTO / COURTESY OF THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY, ART COLLECTIONS, AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

crimes. Quite the contrary. The Kumeyaay attacked the San Diego mission in 1775, killing three Spaniards, including one of Serra's closest associates. As the imprisoned rebels waited to be hanged, Serra called for pardon: "As to the killer, let him live so that he can be saved, for that is the purpose of our coming here and its sole justification." (In fact, Serra said that even if he himself were killed, no one should be arrested.)

Indeed, Serra seemed to sense the inevitability, if not the justice, of the Kumeyaay's revolt. He often spoke of the Indians being *en su tierra* (in their country). Yet isolating the Spanish colonists was not the answer. When the local military commander had the Tongva of San Gabriel erect the very stockade walls that would shut them out, Serra asked, "If we are not allowed to be in touch with these gentiles, what business have we…in such a place?"

Beyond this missionary imperative, there is another distinction to be made between the Spanish and the Anglo colonists. As historian David Weber has noted, by the 1790s in Spanish America, "numerous indigenous peoples had been incorporated rather than eliminated." Spanish and Indian intermarriage was commonplace, whereas such mingling was anathema to most Anglos. Moreover, in California under Spain there were no large-scale massacres—nothing like Wounded Knee or the slaughter of the Modocs. True, the pre-contact population of California (225,000) had been reduced by 33 percent during Spanish and Mexican rule, but that was caused mostly by epidemics. Under American rule (from 1848 on), when most of the twenty-one missions were in ruins, the loss of indigenous lives was catastrophic—80 percent died, leaving just 30,000 in 1870. And nearly half of those losses were due not to disease, but to murder.

Despite this exculpatory history, three accusations have been made against Serra and the missions that need to be answered: that they perpetrated genocide; that they enslaved Indians; and that their treatment of Indians was cruel.

What the Americans did in all but extirpating Indians from the continent was genocide. What the Spanish did, at least in California, was not. This important distinction was acknowledged by two distinguished historians at a California Indian Conference in 2010. The Spanish had no intention of expelling the Indian population, according to James Sandos (*Converting California*) and George Harwood Philips (*Vineyards and Vaqueros*). The missions were designed to attract Indians, not destroy them.

The slavery accusation has its roots in misunderstanding or ignorance of how the missions worked. No Indian was forced to enter a mission, at least in Serra's time. For a native population undergoing a disorienting invasion, the missions offered considerable enticements: food, clothing, shelter, the beauty of the churches, and the transfixing (sometimes fearful) display of Spanish power. Fr. Pedro Font, diarist of the second settler expedition into Upper California (1775–1776), observed, "The method of which the fathers observe in the conversion [of the Indians] is not to oblige anyone to become Christian, admitting only those who voluntarily offer themselves for baptism." Historians confirm the accuracy of Font's statement.

But there was a catch. Once one entered the mission, one was forbidden to leave without permission, and those who did—unless they voluntarily returned—were punished. (Indians typically were given leave for weeks or months to visit their villages, and in some instances, such as at Mission San Luis Rey, Indians stayed in their villages and the

mission served as a kind of parish church.) But the survival of the missions was never a sure thing, and Indian labor ("spiritual debt peonage," as Sandos puts it) was depended on by all. Indians were hunted down and lashed for leaving. It is estimated that the desertion rate was about 10 percent. Yet it is also important to keep in mind that the majority of California Indians never came into the missions in the first place, nor were they forced to—a fact critics often forget.

Of course, if 10 percent were fleeing, 90 percent were staying. Was it from fear? From a sense of defeat or disorientation? Or did those who stayed do so because the missions provided what seemed a stable community in a frequently perilous world? Serra may have felt himself to have landed in Eden at first, but perhaps not all Indians did. True, California tribes had their own sustaining faith systems, mastery in art, pottery, and canoe-building, and great skills in hunting, fishing, and gathering. Still, just as it is today, eighteenth-century California was subject to severe drought. Outside the missions, tribal rivalries could result in bloodshed. Women were bought and sold. A shaman could target you with vengeance. Life in the missions with its food and shelter, its art and music and gospel of love, may have appealed to a not insignificant number of native peoples, despite onerous punishment.

Were Indians flogged? Yes, for theft, assault, concubinage, and desertion. Corporal punishment was of course routine at the time in European and most other cultures, though strange to California Indians (some tribes subjected prisoners-of-war to a gauntlet of thrashings). Did that make it right? Of course not. It was wrong. However, nothing in the record suggests that Serra was a cruel or vindictive overlord. "We have all come here and remained here for the sole purpose of [the Indians'] well-being and salvation," he wrote. "And I believe everyone realizes we love them." Unlike many of his co-religionists, Serra almost never referred to Indians as savages or barbarians; though at times he'd say *infieles*, most often he called them *gentiles* or *pobres* or simply *indios*. He boldly questioned the Spanish governor's application of the phrase *gente de razón* (people of reason) solely to Spaniards. Clearly, Serra thought he was bringing salvation to people of equal dignity.

Part of the current puzzlement and anger over the Serra canonization is motivated by an entirely justified revulsion over the historic crimes committed against the Indians. Until the past few decades, American culture was largely indifferent to those crimes, and portrayed the victims as savages. Serra figured as a character in the 1955 film *Seven Cities of Gold*, which, according the *New York Times*, involved "acrobatic Indians as painted and feathered demons." Good riddance to all that. We must put away the caricatures of Hollywood, and come to terms with the real history—the near extermination—of Native Americans at the hands of white Americans. But if that is the case, I think an understanding of the real Serra is just as essential.

The historical record tells us that Serra was neither the perfect man the pious long for nor the vicious conquistador others imagine him to have been. In seeking reconciliation, can a real Serra and real Native Americans speak to each other across the centuries? Isn't this what Pope Francis called for in his remarks about the sins of Spanish colonialism during his visit to Bolivia in July? "I also would like us to recognize the priests and bishops who strongly opposed the logic of the sword with the strength of the cross," he said. "There was sin. There was sin, and in abundance, and for this we ask forgiveness. But…where there was sin, where there was abundant sin, grace abounded, through these men who defended the justice of the native peoples."

There have been moments of real grace in the battle over Serra's canonization. Consider two protest moments at Carmel, separated by thirty years. In 1987, Sr. Boniface, the nun whose cure had elevated Serra to beatification, "greeted and embraced" protesting Native Americans at Mission Carmel. Her fellow sisters were welcomed into the prayer circle of the protesters. Chumash leader Cheqweesh Auh-Ho-Oh was sitting off to the side with her eyes closed. Sr. Carolyn Mruz recalls touching her on the shoulder and saying, "Peace, sister." At first, the Indian woman did not respond, but then her eyes fluttered open, and she said, "You are the first member of the church to approach me in peace. I knew it was a woman. And I knew it would be a religious sister."

This year, during an Easter protest over Serra's canonization, Fr. Paul Murphy emerged after saying Mass to welcome the protesters to Mission Carmel. He asked them to come at any time and state their needs. "I see Mission Carmel as a place of healing," he said. "We all need healing." Former Esselen tribal chief Rudy Rosales, who had attended the Mass, also spoke to the protesters. Though some local Indians grumbled that their cemetery was being violated by outside tribes participating in the protest, the fifty protesters dispersed peacefully—partly, some thought, because of the presence of so many children at Easter.

Archaeologist Ruben Mendoza—of both Yaqui Indian and Hispanic descent—was impressed by the peacefulness of the demonstration. His father had hated the church and the missions. When in fourth grade, Mendoza refused to do his required history project on the Franciscans (instead he built a model of a dinosaur). In high school, he fashioned Aztec pyramids out of stone and took an Aztec name: Tezcatlipoca. "I became obsessed with 'pure' Indian cultures," he remembered. He carried this obsession into graduate school at the University of Arizona, where he studied under Vine Deloria Jr., the celebrated author of *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*.

Three "transformative" experiences, however, brought Mendoza to a new understanding of California history. The first was an invitation from the Mexican government to excavate a sixteenth-century convent in Puebla. There Christian and Spanish artifacts were mixed with Aztec ceramics and

mosaics that showed "an incredibly diverse mass of humanity," Mendoza said. The idea of a "pure" culture—Indian or otherwise—came to seem illusory. Mendoza himself is a mixture. A second revelatory moment occurred when, excavating at the San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey, he discovered the earliest chapel used by Serra in 1770. "After years of rejecting the California mission era, I felt a powerful personal connection with it," he said. "I'm Iberian, indigenous, and Mexican. It took years to reconcile those differences."

Finally, during the 2000 winter solstice, Mendoza witnessed the dawn sunlight flood into Mission San Juan Bautista. Investigating other missions, he identified thirteen "precisely oriented…to capture illuminations, some on days that would have been sacred to Native Americans." Might the Franciscans have gone out of their way to show respect for Indian traditions?

What is happening now, one hopes, is the complementary emergence of an ethic of apology in the church over the sins of colonialism and of Indian representatives who are willing to take another look at the complexity of the encounter between the Franciscans and native peoples. This gradual convergence, demonstrating good faith on both sides of the issue, has been underway for some time. "If you take a look at the accomplishments of Serra, there has to be recognition," Jerry Nieblas, an Acjachemen leader at San Juan Capistrano told me in 2010. "But I don't want Franciscans to be too proud." The Ohlone-Patwin Andrew Galvan, the only Indian curator of a California mission (San Francisco Dolores), puts it well: "The bottom line is my belief that Junípero Serra was a very good person in a very bad situation." California Indian leader Galvan and his Mexican Indian counterpart Mendoza agree on sainthood. Says Mendoza, "I've always felt the canonization process was stymied through misinformation and politicization, and laying blame and onus on one individual who was actually in constant conflict with governors and military commanders in New Spain over how they were treating Indians." On August 11, 2013, Ernestine de Soto—a Chumash shaman and registered nurse—prayed to a relic of Serra from Mission Santa Barbara and witnessed the apparently miraculous recovery of her daughter from a deathbed case of cryptogenic pneumonia. It was the first contemporary miracle attributed to Serra by a Native American. But now, because of Pope Francis, another miracle is no longer necessary.

Why did Pope Francis pick Serra? Why did he dust off an old candidacy lost in centuries of controversy, and put it in the spotlight? And why would he choose to celebrate Serra in the seat of American power—Washington, D.C.?

I think there are several reasons. First, Francis finds in Serra a powerful kindred soul, an echo of his own love of

the simple, the humble, and service to the poor. He sees Serra as a saint for our anxious times, and canonizing him in Washington rather than California implicitly marks him as a national, and even transnational, saint of the Americas. Francis dispensed with the need for a second miracle in part because he felt Serra's spiritual qualifications and missionary work were so compelling.

I suspect that Francis also admires Junípero's courage to speak truth to power. After all, the pope himself has taken on the Curia, the Vatican Bank, Wall Street, as well as those who would deny global warming or the injustice of abortion.

In a one-day Vatican conference on the Californian Franciscan in May, Francis cited "missionary zeal" as the first of the three "key aspects" of Serra's life (the others are his devotion to Mary and "witness of holiness"). "What made Friar Junípero leave his home and country, his family, university chair, and Franciscan community in Mallorca to go to the ends of the earth?" Francis asked during Mass at the Pontifical North American College. "Certainly it was the desire to proclaim the Gospel *ad gentes*, that heartfelt impulse which seeks to share with those farthest away the gift of encountering Christ."

Notice that Francis identifies Serra's faith with the heart. Faith is a function of the heart as far as this pope is concerned. "Such zeal excites us, it challenges us!" the pope proclaimed. Admitting that it's important to "thoughtfully examine [the missionaries'] strengths and, above all, their weaknesses and shortcomings," Francis still found Serra to be a saintly man and true disciple of Christ. "I wonder if today we are able to respond with the same generosity and courage to the call of God," especially to those "who have not known Christ and, therefore, have not experienced the embrace of his mercy," the pope said.

Of his "shortcomings" over public silence concerning the depredations of the Argentine junta in the 1970s, Francis has spoken eloquently of his own need for mercy; he may see a mirror of his attempt to do good in extraordinarily difficult, dangerous times in Serra's own life.

Finally, Serra's attention to, and reverence for, the natural world resonates with Francis's new environmental encyclical, *Laudato si'*. The title of that encyclical is borrowed from St. Francis's "Canticle of the Sun," with its refrain of "praised be" ("Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind…. Praised be You, My Lord, for Sister Water.") Serra's detailed observations about the trees and plants he found in California end with the same praise for their Creator: "I have in front of me a cutting from a rose-tree with three roses in bloom, others opening out, and more than six unpetaled: blessed be He who created them!" Serra also demonstrated great respect—remarkable at the time—for Indian watering holes. Coming across "good, sweet water," he insisted that the Spaniards and their animals not drink it: "We do not want to spoil the watering site for the poor gentiles." In short, Serra was a Franciscan who truly lived up to the spirit of St. Francis, a spirit also embodied by the first pope to use that name.

In canonizing Serra, Francis "seizes the day" of the Hispanic ascension in North America. Many Americans think of this demographic change as an "invasion." Francis has come to remind Americans who was here first—and not just physically, but spiritually. And who, indeed, is here now. This is not an attempt to erase original Indian life from the church's memory, but a deeply respectful acknowledgement of it, because it was that life that Serra served up to the moment of his death. As the essayist Richard Rodriguez has suggested, the Mestizo—the melding of the Hispanic and the Indian—is the key to both North America's mostly hidden past and its future. Which group of Americans will likely determine the result of the next presidential election? Who plants, fertilizes, and harvests the crops that feed this country? Who cleans American homes? Who, indeed, builds them? Who fixes the roads? Who tends to the gardens? And who leads the way to Mass? The children of Junípero Serra, that's who. ■

Statue of Blessed Junípero Serra on the grounds of San Diego Presidio in California

CNS PHOTO / NANCY WIECHEC

The Myth, the Monk, the Man

Reading & Rereading Thomas Merton

Luke Timothy Johnson

When *The Seven Storey Mountain* was published in 1949 and became an instant classic, Thomas Merton was only thirty-four years old and had been a Trappist monk for just seven years. The book made him the most famous monk in the world, and he would remain both agent and symbol of the rapidly changing face of Catholicism in the twentieth century until his untimely death at the age of fifty-three. On the centenary of his birth, it is appropriate to celebrate the remarkable role he played and the influence he exerted in what was, by any measure, a short life, and to appreciate the complex psychological pressures and spiritual ambitions that made Merton's life at once painful and creative. I know that others whose lives were touched by Merton will understand if this short essay is as much personal as it is analytic. One of Merton's gifts as a writer was the ability to insinuate himself into the lives of people he had never met, and remain, even decades after his death, inexplicably a significant and deeply personal presence. That was certainly true for me.

I was fourteen years old in 1958 when I read *The Seven Storey Mountain*, restricted to the seminary infirmary and slightly feverish with appendicitis. Orphaned at age eleven, I was just looking for a home that was safe and sane, and somehow found myself a seminarian for the Natchez-Jackson diocese at St. Joseph Seminary, with Benedictine monks as my teachers and surrogate fathers. Merton's masterpiece was undoubtedly a key element in speeding my own decision to become a monk. Although I was already steeping myself in Belloc and Chesterton, those hardy Catholic apologists of an earlier generation, Merton introduced me to another sort of voice altogether. It captured me entirely.

How great this book then seemed, how glamorous! Here, it seemed to me, was the Augustine of the twentieth century, the intellectual and bohemian sinner who found his home in Catholicism. Part of the appeal of the book, as with Augustine's *Confessions*, was its classic structure of sin and conversion. In this case, of course, sin was appealingly clothed in a worldly sophistication I had earlier met only in novels. Merton had been born into the world of art and literature, attended renowned universities, frequented plays and jazz clubs. Yet he fled from that charmed world and entered Gethsemane (the site of crucifixion!), forsaking all the wiles of Satan for the disciplines of the monastic life. This journey made him the perfect exemplification of pre–Vatican II piety and, for a reader twenty-eight years his junior, a mythic figure.

And such he remained for me and countless others, many of whom followed him into monasticism. I entered St. Joseph Abbey in 1963 and left in 1973. Merton was known to us then through his books on spirituality. For idealistic readers like me, *The Sign of Jonas* (1953) provided only glimpses of the inner struggles that would emerge so much more clearly when the full collection of Merton's journals was published. It was *The Sign of Jonas*, I suspect, that sealed the deal for my entering monastic life. Why? Because it revealed just enough of the personal experience of monasticism to be enticing, and it was enticing precisely because of the difficulties that the life evidently entailed!

As a guide to the inner life, ascetical and contemplative, Thomas Merton served young monks of my generation as a steady, sane, and reliable master. Each new book—*Seeds of Contemplation* (1949), *Ascent to Truth* (1951), *No Man is an Island* (1955), *Thoughts in Solitude* (1958)—was eagerly read and uncritically accepted as wise counsel for those of us trying to be monks. I remember, for example, how illuminating for a would-be young poet were his reflections on poetry and contemplation in the appendix to his early collection, *Thirty Poems* (1944). However, such books revealed little of Merton's own struggles with cenobitism and his fascination with the eremitical life.

When Merton subsequently made his momentous turn to the world, thousands of his readers were willing to follow him in this direction as well. The turn was actually twofold: first, he expanded his already capacious appre-

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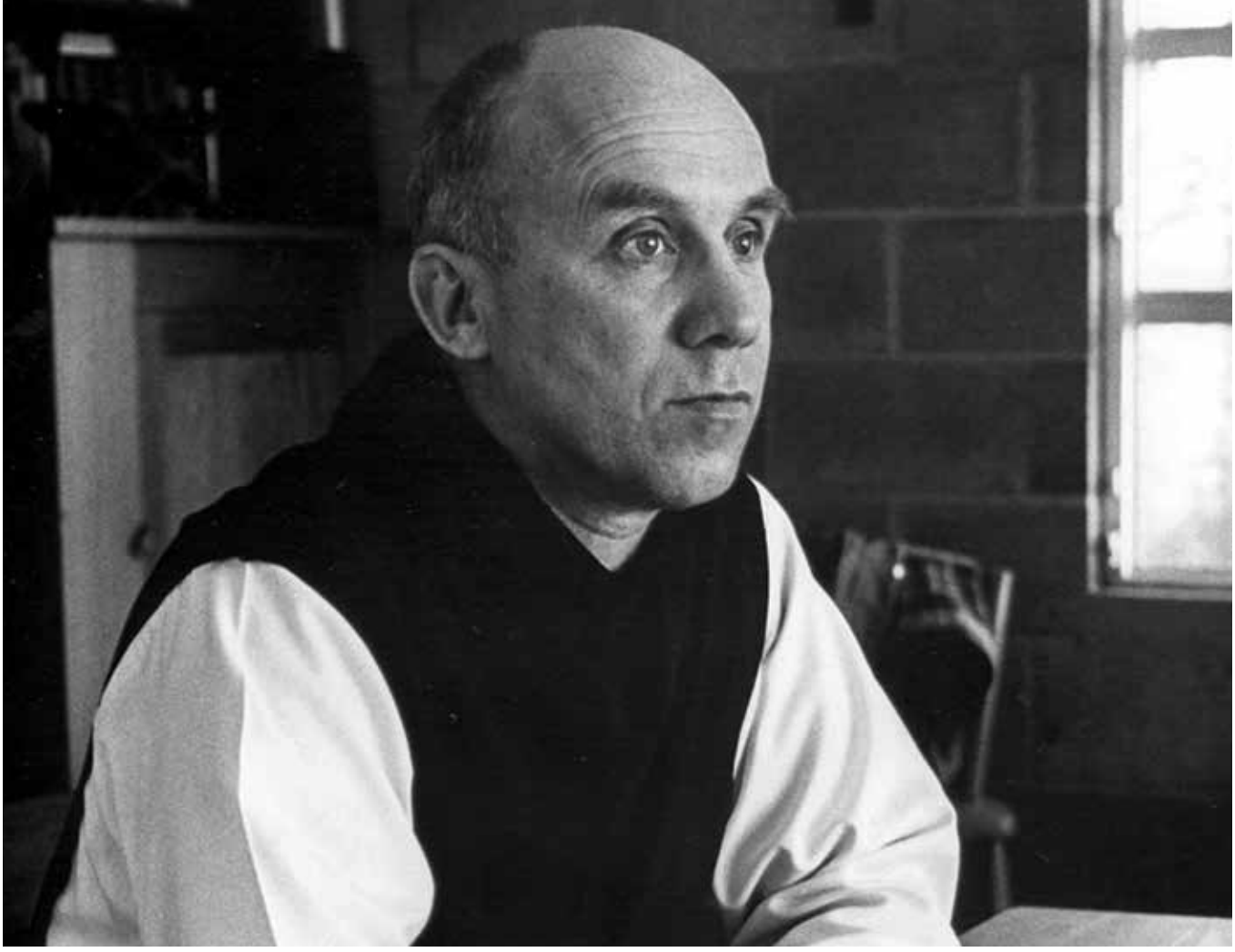

CNS PHOTO / MERTON LEGACY TRUST AND THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER AT BELLARMINE UNIVERSITY

ciation for diverse paths of spirituality into a sustained conversation with Sufism, Buddhism, and, above all, the practice of Zen. In works like *Mystics and Zen Masters* (1967) and *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968), he introduced readers to a conversation that he had begun some time before, with religious traditions other than Catholic or even Christian. For his faithful admirers, he opened paths toward God that Catholicism had long regarded mostly with suspicion. Second, he began to explicitly address the major social issues of the day: capitalism and the distortions of consumerism; war (especially nuclear) and peace; civil rights. From his deep immersion in the traditions of contemplation, he joined with Dorothy Day and the Berrigan brothers to bring a Catholic voice to the social struggles of the 1960s. In books like *Seeds of Destruction* (1964), *Faith and Violence* (1965), *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (1966), and *Raids on the Unspeakable* (1966), Merton gave voice to a distinctive prophetic perspective on "the world" that he had once seemed determined to turn away from. Now he spoke about worldly concerns with a clear sense of urgency. His own turn matched Vatican II's spirit of *aggiornamento*, but did so with a tone that was perhaps less expectant and more challenging. What made Merton's social engagement so powerful, I think, was precisely that it emerged from the depths of Catholic and monastic spirituality.

After I left the monastery at the age of twenty-eight and tried to learn how to be a husband, father, and citizen, I thought of Merton as a figure from a former life, remembered mainly for what he once had meant to me and for some passages of his writing that had etched themselves in my brain. Only after many years had passed, when I was older than Merton himself was when he died, did I read all of his journals and many of his letters. In the process, I discovered him all over again. This time I did not see him as a mythic and infallible guide to a life I no longer lived, but as a living voice speaking beyond the specific and fascinating circumstances of his circumscribed vocation to my human condition as well. I discovered him anew as a difficult and attractive human being, who in turn charmed and infuriated me, but who always made his humanity palpably real and present on the page.

Reading the journals and letters enabled me to consider again the reasons why Merton remains vividly alive and pertinent to so many today, when other theological voices of the twentieth century seem locked in the past. There is in the first place, I think, his fluid style of writing, which is everywhere light and slightly jazzy, everywhere accessible and easy to read, everywhere at once revealing and camouflaging an impressive level of erudition. The man read and assimilated an astonishing amount, and his vast learning informs everything he wrote, without intruding through footnotes or technical jargon. In fact, when Merton was most explicitly didactic, he was least effective. His writing was most compelling when it was

most personal, when his eyes and ears and sensitive sense of things were immediately present in his prose.

The directness of his style is in part due to his process of composition. He used his journals to think through what he had read and experienced in the preparation of lessons for younger monks. Consequently, there was a seamless transition from communicating with himself and his brothers to communicating with readers outside the monastery. Merton always wrote directly out of his personal experience, whether that was the experience of the liturgy or of manual labor, or the experience of reading Scripture or Bernard of Clairvaux, or Meister Eckhart. In each instance, his words took on the distinctive character of personal witness. In this regard, he anticipated and doubtless influenced such later spiritual writers as Henri Nouwen, Kathleen Norris, and Roberta Bondi.

Part of the excitement in reading Merton early and late was sharing his sense of engagement with whatever engaged him. Merton's readers explored new things as Merton explored them. We think of the twentieth-century theologians before Vatican II as involved in *ressourcement*, the recovery of sources. It is easy to forget how much of the Christian tradition Merton learned as an ebullient amateur and then taught—with joy and enthusiasm—to others. He made the monastic mode of reading Scripture available to others (*Bread in the Wilderness* [1953], *The Living Bread* [1956], *Praying the Psalms* [1956]). He studied and celebrated the patristic and monastic riches of Clement of Alexandria, John Cassian, and the great teachers within the Cistercian and Carthusian traditions. He took thinkers within Orthodoxy seriously. He sought connections between the classics of Christian spirituality and those of other religions. In short, he educated several generations of Catholics in a Catholicism that transcended the narrow bounds of scholasticism and the rigid formalism of modern clerical culture. Merton's "turn to the world" was, in this sense, a logical development of a Catholicism that was, and had always been, larger and more embracing than many of his contemporaries were able to see.

It was this catholic sensibility that made his engagement with the world of politics and culture so convincing. When he first entered Gethsemane he imagined that religious commitment required separation and detachment. His course of reading and reflection—and the wide-ranging conversations that his publications and fame brought to him—eventually led him to understand that a religious vocation is not a thing apart. Monks, too, were called to be responsible citizens of the world. Ascending to the truth through a life of prayer and contemplation did not have as its end the perfection or satisfaction of the monk. Rather, its proper end was to speak the truth in love to a world desperately in need of the reality disclosed by the monastic life of prayer and contemplation. In the end, Thomas Merton was what we now call a "public theologian" precisely because he grounded himself in a specific and private place.

The journals, more than any of the works published during his lifetime, also show us a psychologically complex Merton, who can fairly be called "a thoroughly modern monk." He was a man who, although deliberately and deeply steeped in traditions from antiquity, embodied contradictions that seem to be distinctively modern. No one can miss, for example, a trace of narcissism—a constant care for the self—that runs through his life and of which he was at least partially aware. Indeed, he tried to combat that failing through the disciplines of charity and a deep concern for friends and strangers alike. Perhaps it is because of the nature of a personal journal, but we find in it very little about the states of mind of others, or the health of the monastic community. The journals suggest that the most famous monk of the twentieth century was not really a monk, in this most basic sense: at the heart of the monastic life is the refusal to see oneself as an exception or as exceptional; obedience to the rule and the abbot do not apply only to others, they apply above all to oneself. But such a sense of being special everywhere pervades Merton's journals. This explains, it seems to me, his struggle concerning the cenobite life and his hankering to be a Carthusian or Camaldolese, thus the quest to live as a hermit; to be fully alone is to be fully special.

Closely connected to such self-preoccupation is Merton's struggle with celebrity. On one side, there was his desire to be a solitary; on the other side was the prodigious production of books that constantly fueled his fame, stimulated a flood of correspondence and a steady stream of visitors to the monastery door. Such attention—and much of it from those of great worldly status—must have titillated Merton, even as it drove him deeper into the Kentucky woods. He had made Gethsemane a tourist spot but was deeply ambivalent about being its main attraction. Think of what his life would have been like today in the age of electronic communication. Merton would have found it hard to resist being on Twitter, and would have been miserable inside his self-constructed maze of media.

I compared Thomas Merton to Augustine of Hippo. Those who know Augustine well will recognize some of Merton's foibles in the ancient saint. Augustine too was more than a little self-preoccupied, was also the victim of a fame that was largely self-generated, was also a man with a restless heart that longed for the rest that could be found only in God. Merton's journals show us a man who is, in Nietszche's phrase, "human, all too human." For readers like me, the posthumously published journals were essential in helping to make a once mythic figure and monastic icon more accessible and attractive. Discovering the warts and wrinkles, the psychic quirks and limitations, does not detract from but rather enhances appreciation of Merton's stupendous accomplishments, and of his remarkable loyalty to a way of life for which he was perhaps temperamentally not perfectly fitted. We can see all the more clearly now that Thomas Merton bore witness to God with a passion that never wavered, and with a freshness that does not grow stale. ■

Icons of Devastation

The Poetry of Paul Celan

Paul J. Griffiths

Paul Celan's poetry is, by most accounts, among the great postwar European literary achievements. George Steiner appeals to it as the best, and perhaps only convincing, answer to Theodor Adorno's claim that poetry is no longer possible after the Shoah. He's right to do so. Celan's work is indeed paradigmatic of what poetry ought to look like in that long shadow, and it has prompted an enormous and often reverential critical response. But his poetry is always difficult and sometimes agonizing; reading it provides no easy pleasures. It has therefore been more admired than read, especially in the anglophone world.

I myself came late to Paul Celan's poetry. I was in my teens when he died in 1970 (he was forty-nine), and I remember the obituaries in the English papers and the sense that someone important had gone. I tried to read him then, but could make nothing of his condensed intensities. I was infatuated with Eliot and Yeats and Auden, and Celan was too different and too hard. I set him aside, for decades. Then, about five years ago, a friend pointed me to an audio recording, available on YouTube, of Celan reading his early poem "Todesfuge" (Deathfugue). It's hypnotic, whether or not you can understand German. "Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland" is one of its refrains and, like most of the poem, it needs no translation. Listening to this several times prompted me to return to Celan's poetry, hoping, now that I was older than he was when he died, that I might be able to find some way into it.

I read it, at first, in the English versions provided by Michael Hamburger, and then, more recently, in the translations of Pierre Joris. Both seem to me excellent (though in different ways), and both are usually published in facing-page German-English editions, which provide English-speakers with a window into the German. My own German is good enough for ordinary academic prose and the less colloquial newpapers, but it's not good enough for Celan. Perhaps no one's is. Celan's German is about as distant from the prosaic as it's possible to get, and while reading him in English removes some surface lexical difficulties for me, the translations make the real difficulties more evident, which is just what they should do. Those difficulties are both semantic and emotional. The words of Celan's late poems are shattered fragments. They resist attempts to squeeze meaning out of them or to fit them together neatly, and they provoke in the reader (in this reader, anyway) a combination of admiration, frustration, and despair, together with the occasional epiphany.

That may not sound like much of a recommendation, but it is. I've kept returning to Celan these past five years, and, although he's certainly no Catholic poet, I've found that reading him has nurtured, deepened, and partly reformed my Catholic faith.

Celan was born in 1920 in Cernăuți in Bukovina, which was then just about to become part of Romania. It is now called Chernivitsi, and is, for the moment at least, in Ukraine. He grew up Jewish and was multi-lingual, able to speak German, Romanian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Hebrew, French, and Russian. After experiencing, as a young man, the bloodfields of Eastern Europe and the Nazi attempt to eradicate Europe's Jews (both his parents were killed by the SS, and he was put to forced labor), he finally left Romania in 1945 and lived in Paris from 1948 until his death. He committed suicide there by drowning himself in the Seine in April 1970.

Celan wrote some early poems in Romanian, but from 1947 on he wrote poetry only in German. He began to become known as a poet in 1952, with the publication of the volume *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (*Poppy and Memory*). This contained "Todesfuge," which was widely read, celebrated, and anthologized in the 1950s and '60s. The early poetry, from the late 1940s through the early '60s, is incantatory and sometimes surrealistic, its tropes piled one on top of another. It seems designed to overwhelm the reader.

Consider, for example, the opening of "Assisi" (1955), as translated by Hamburger: "Umbrian night. / Umbrian night with the silver of churchbell and olive leaf. / Umbrian night with the stone that you carried here. / Umbrian night with the stone." The poem ends with an explicit invocation of St. Francis, whose life has shed "brightness that will not

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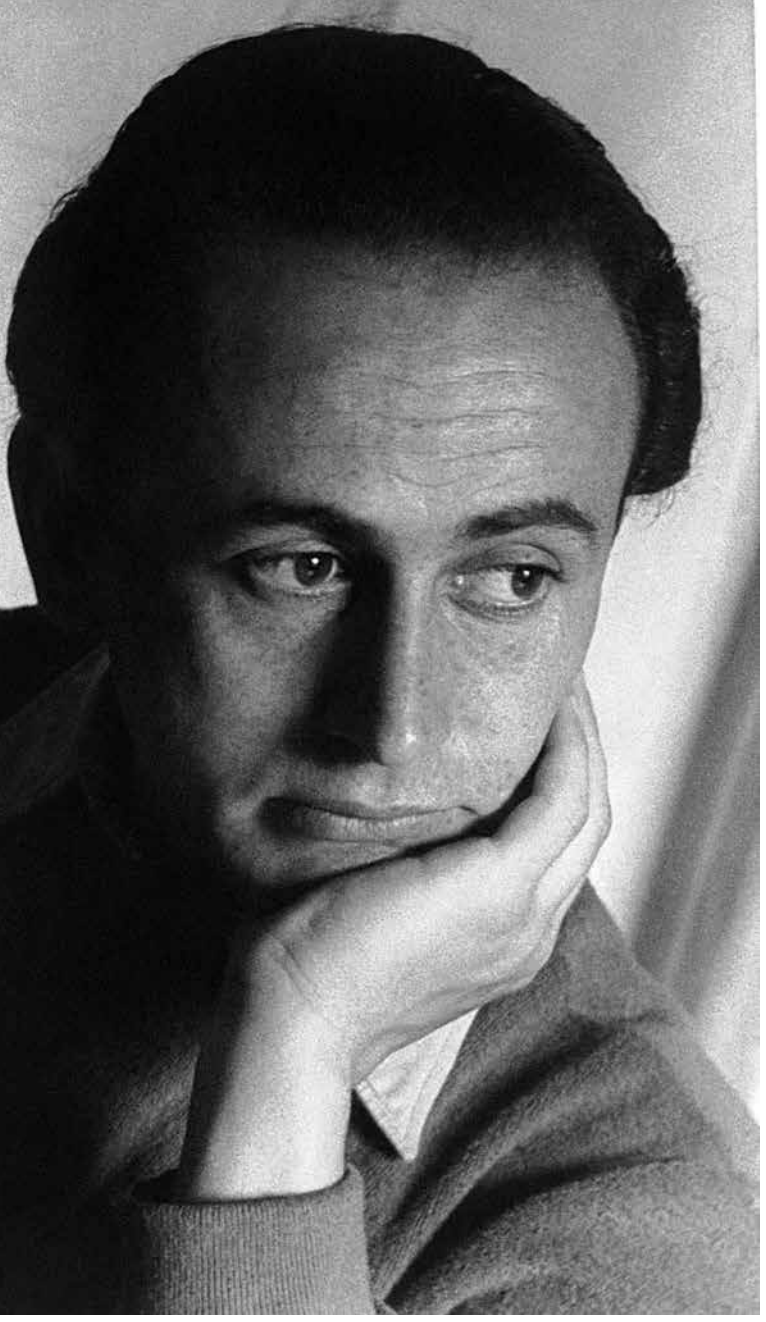


comfort," even though comfort is exactly what the dead beg for from Francis. There's not much comfort in Celan's work, and "Assisi" is a poem about death, despite its affecting evocation of the life of a place. Here death and absence frame and explain life and presence: Assisi's shrines and olive trees and churches are given their meaning by the absence of the man they celebrate. "Assisi" has to be read several times before it achieves its effect—which is to lull readers with its incantation, so that they are, like it or not, placed in the comfortless and moon-shadowed Umbrian night. The Celan of "Assisi," and of many of the other early poems, is a lyrical litanist.

The later poetry is very different. Between 1967 and 1976, almost six years after his death, five brief volumes appeared under Celan's name, beginning with *Atemwende* (*Breathturn*) and ending with *Zeitgehöft* (*Timestead*). There is, in addition, a brief cycle of eleven poems collected by Celan in 1968 for publication in an anthology of work by several different poets called *Aus aufgegebenen Werken* (*From Abandoned Works*). Celan gave this cycle the lovely (and difficult) title *Eingedunkelt*, which Joris renders *Tenebrae'd*. All this has now been translated by Joris in Breathturn to *Timestead: The Collected Later Poetry*, published last year in a beautiful bilingual edition by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. This is the book to read if you're new to Celan, though it should be supplemented by Michael Hamburger's *Poems of Paul Celan* (2002), which contains selections from the earlier poetry as well.

The late poems are short and mostly untitled. They often appear as parts of a cycle, each part typically between twenty and a hundred words long, and each cycle including about a dozen parts. Themes and tropes run through the cycles, so that readers can build up a sense of continuity—of resonances and echoes and currents of thought. But there's also plenty of discontinuity: scenes shift frequently, and no explicit connection links one scene to the next. The overall effect is of looking at a series of half-completed sketches of a devastated landscape, each drawn from a different point of view.

An example. In April 1968 Celan visited London briefly, staying with his aunt on Mapesbury Road. He wrote a poem there on the fourteenth of the month, which that year was both Easter Sunday and the second day of Passover. The poem begins by sketching a scene: a black woman walks down a quiet street; there's a magnolia tree blooming and a sense of disquiet: "By her side / the / magnolia-houred half-watch / of a red, / that also searches for meaning elsewhere— / or maybe nowhere." Meaning is perhaps available, perhaps not, but it doesn't *yield* itself: it has to be sought, "elsewhere." The obscure reference to time—"magnolia-houred half-watch"—is picked up in the next lines:

> The full
> timehalo around
> a lodged bullet, next to it, brainish.

"Timehalo" is Joris's translation of *Zeithof*—a word about as uncommon in German as "timehalo" is in English. Celan may have borrowed it from the philosopher Edmund Husserl, for whom the word identified the copresence of the past and the future in a moment of memory. Suppose you're remembering hearing a piece of music: in the musical tone present in each memory-moment there's a "halo," or nimbus, provided by the tone that preceded it and the one that follows. The woman, the street, the magnolia, the silence—all are linked together in time, or by time, to a bullet in someone's brain. Joris notes that Celan may have had in mind the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., which had happened ten days before the poem was written. Perhaps he was also thinking of the assassination attempt on the activist Rudi Dutschke in Berlin three days before. Both events involved bullets to the head. But the poem itself doesn't say so. What it says is that violence and silence are somehow present together, proleptically and retrospectively, in a single moment of memory.

This poem is typical of Celan's late poetry. It resists paraphrase just as it resists understanding, and for the same reason: it shows you something that can barely be seen. The words of the poem bring past and future into the present and lodge the reader, addressed as "you," in the middle of that temporal knot. It's not a comfortable place to be. That the poem was composed on Easter and during Passover adds to the "timehalo." Those are days when violence, blood, and death are temporally knotted with life—the lodged bullet, brainish, with the blooming magnolia.

"Mapesbury Road" isn't without its difficulties, but it's almost transparent compared to some of Celan's shorter lyrics. Here's an untitled piece, composed in January 1968 and published as part of the sequence that begins the volume *Schneepart/Snow Part* (1971). It contains twenty-two words in German, and twenty-six in Joris's translation:

> Unreadability of this
> world. Everything doubles.
>
> The strong clocks
> agree with the fissure-hour,
> hoarsely.
>
> You, wedged into your deepest,
> climb out of yourself
> forever.

"This world" is illegible: it resists our efforts to construe it. "Everything doubles" (*Alles doppelt*). A better translation might be "Everything repeats," which would anticipate the shift to time language in the second verse. This doubling, or repeating, may be an element in the world's unreadability. Whatever you, the reader, look at won't be singular; it will already have happened and will happen again. The second verse has an air of violence. The "strong clocks," those unavoidable time measurers, agree with, or justify, or yield the right to (all possible readings of "*geben...recht*") the "fissure-hour," the time at which a crevasse opens up. But opens between what and what? And into what? We're not told. The "fissure-hour" (*Spaltstunde*), a moment of division, is part of the doubling announced in the first verse. The strong clocks announce it again, unpleasantly: their voice is hoarse.

A poem about the world's unreadability should not be easy to read, and this one isn't. The poem thematizes its own difficulty, as much of Celan's late poetry does. If you read it together with the other eleven short pieces that make up the first section of *Schneepart*, and if you read all twelve pieces several times, Celan's preferred images and contorted syntax begin to feel familiar. You still cannot easily say what the poems mean; after all, they are by their own account illegible. But their very difficulty begins to change the way you read not only them but also the world they describe. Once acknowledged, illegibility becomes an interpretive lens, through which absence and lack declare themselves. That, for this reader, is one of the principal results of reading Celan.

I'm a Catholic reader. Not only that, but a Catholic theologian, someone whose profession and vocation it is to read, teach, and write Catholic theology. Celan was none of these things. He was a poet who was also a Jew ("Jewish poet" isn't quite right), whose vision of the world's resistance to meaning and its blood-bathed disorder was unusually intense, and who was himself damaged by the disorders about which he wrote.

What am I doing, then, when I read him? I don't baptize him, or read him as if he were a Catholic manqué. Those are indefensible, indeed revolting, ways of reading Celan. But as a Catholic reader, I feel the need of a Catholic poetics, a Catholic understanding of what it is to read poetry—and not just poetry, but also other kinds of literature—made by those external to Catholicism and therefore without Catholic doctrinal and liturgical formation. I don't read Celan, or at least not the late poetry, for beauty—the well-wrought urn, the verbal icon that participates in the world's ordered beauty. There's none of that in his late work. There's intensity, flashes of light and loveliness; but the deep tones humming through it all are those of incomprehensibility and damage. The word stutters, as Celan puts it in another of his poems, and that stuttering places the fabric of speech under so much strain that almost nothing can be said, and what is said can't be understood.

What I see when I read Celan is a series of verbal icons of the devastation in which we live. The world, for Catholics, has been devastated by the Fall. It's full of fissures opening into incomprehensible violence and apparently random death. That's not all it is, but it is at least that. Representation of this is a difficult trick because the nature of devastation is to resist representation. The poet must somehow find words to participate in lack and absence, and that's exactly what Celan's poetry does. Its difficulty is a proper part of its response to what can't be seen.

We Catholics too often move quickly in our literature and our art toward representations of beauty, and refuse to look seriously at devastation. For some, it seems, art cannot be properly Catholic unless it is beautiful and attends to beauty. That can't be right, and it may be worth noting that it's mostly non-Catholics, and especially Jews, who know that it's not right and show something else, something from which we Catholics would rather avert our gaze. When Catholic poets and painters do attempt something like what Celan does—Goya's black paintings, for example, or O'Connor's grotesqueries—we're likely to exclude such work from the Catholic canon. We shouldn't. A fully Catholic poetics would seek models for the artist's response to the devastation. Celan is essential for this. When I read him I am deepened in my appreciation of, and given real instruction in, a doctrinal position I already hold, which is that the world is damaged, and myself along with it. When I read him I am shown something of the extent and depth of that damage, and can more easily find words to indicate what cannot be shown. Those are great gifts. ■

Richard Alleva

Curiously Incurious

'IRRATIONAL MAN'

You will never see a movie better designed or more carefully premeditated than Woody Allen's *Irrational Man*. Notwithstanding the film's title, not a scintilla of irrationality finds its way into Allen's writing or direction.

The story offers a comedy of horrors meant to make us grimace rather than laugh. Abe Lucas (Joaquin Phoenix) is a philosophy professor with the sodden charisma of a Dylan Thomas. He brings to his new teaching post at a fictional Newport college a reputation for both brilliance and dissoluteness. Although he's devoted himself in the past to worthy causes such as relief work in Bangladesh, the violent death of a friend in the Middle East has plunged him into a depression from which neither his work nor an affair with a married colleague, Rita (Parker Posey), can rouse him. He now believes that all philosophizing is futile, a vain escape into words, words, words. Then, while socializing with his favorite student, Jill (Emma Stone), he overhears a woman complaining that a corrupt judge is separating her from her child in a divorce case. Abe, a great admirer of *Crime and Punishment* (though we may come to wonder if he ever got through the later chapters), determines to make his mark on the world by killing the judge, and both his decision and, later, the deed itself, lift him into an exhilaration that entails a renewed sex life with both Rita and Jill. Eventually the two women come to suspect the cause of Abe's reawakening.

The opening scenes not only set forth the locale, the leading characters, and the first stage of the plot, but also adumbrate everything to come. When Abe is praised for his treatise on "situational ethics," we are being alerted that a perverted version of that concept will lead to murder. When Jill acknowledges that Abe has influenced her ideas about "randomness and chance," this is a wry foreshadowing of the role chance will play at a crucial moment in her life. Even a seemingly casual object, a shoddy little flashlight won by Abe at a fair and given to Jill, turns out to have grave consequences, and there's irony in the fact that he dismisses his gift as a bauble while Jill insists on its practicality. Little does either of them know…

Allen's shrewd planning extends beyond the script to its visualization. Abetted by Darius Khondji's cinematography, with its subtle recurrence of soft pinks and subdued greens, the director has captured the genteel-bohemian look of a college located near a handsome city and makes the placid beauty of the place an ironic counterpoint to the horrors Abe plots and performs. And Allen's choice of the jazz standard "The

In Crowd" as the main theme on his soundtrack carries its own sting, since for him (at least nowadays) we're all trying to be part of the in-crowd, even when the real insiders are sacrificing morality to convenience and sybaritic pleasure. Trouble is, the film is all planning, all schema. Too little spontaneity is permitted within the master plan. What's missing are the vivid details, the dramatic nuances and shadings, the generosity of sidelights that are necessary to bring a movie to life. Worse than that, some scenes are marked by a cold obliviousness of human realities.

For instance: Most colleges nowadays maintain fairly strict codes forbidding sexual relationships between undergraduates and their teachers. Yet not only are Jill and Abe having an affair, but the whole college seems to know about it. So why isn't the professor called on the carpet? If he did get in trouble and were to bluff or blackmail or squirm his way out of it, this might enrich the satire, but Allen just doesn't address the issue—even after Abe himself mentions it.

Abe's adultery with Rita thickens the weather of amorality but this subplot also includes some implausibilities. Early on, Rita's husband conveniently goes out of town and doesn't come back till the movie is almost over. At which point Allen stages a break-up scene that brings nothing new to the story and whose dialogue might have been lifted from a soap opera.

Jill is not only a major character but one of the film's two narrators. (Abe's the other.) Yet how little we know about her—and the little we do know is confusing. We often see her in the company of her parents, but is she living with them? Are she and Abe carrying on in her parents' home? And if so, what do they make of this? Such questions might occur to any viewer paying attention, yet Allen seems curiously incurious about Jill's inner life and background. For him she apparently exists only to keep the plot spinning and to serve as an emblem of feckless youth in feckless times.

I was especially struck by the scene in which Jill, still believing Abe to be innocent, meets with Rita to hear the latter's theory that Abe is most likely the judge's murderer. Since Rita expresses this suspicion only after Abe has replaced her with Jill, wouldn't Jill wonder whether the charge was motivated by jealousy? And wouldn't this lead to a confrontation between the two women? Yet Allen directs the actresses to interact as calmly as if they were drawing up a reading list for a book club. Perhaps he thought the scene would play more subtly if the tensions remained subterranean and only rippled the cool surface of a "civilized" conversation. But they are buried too deep to make dramatic sense. Not that I can complain about Emma Stone's performance as Jill. She's a high-energy actress in command of so many emotional colors that you suspend your doubts about the character until the movie is over.

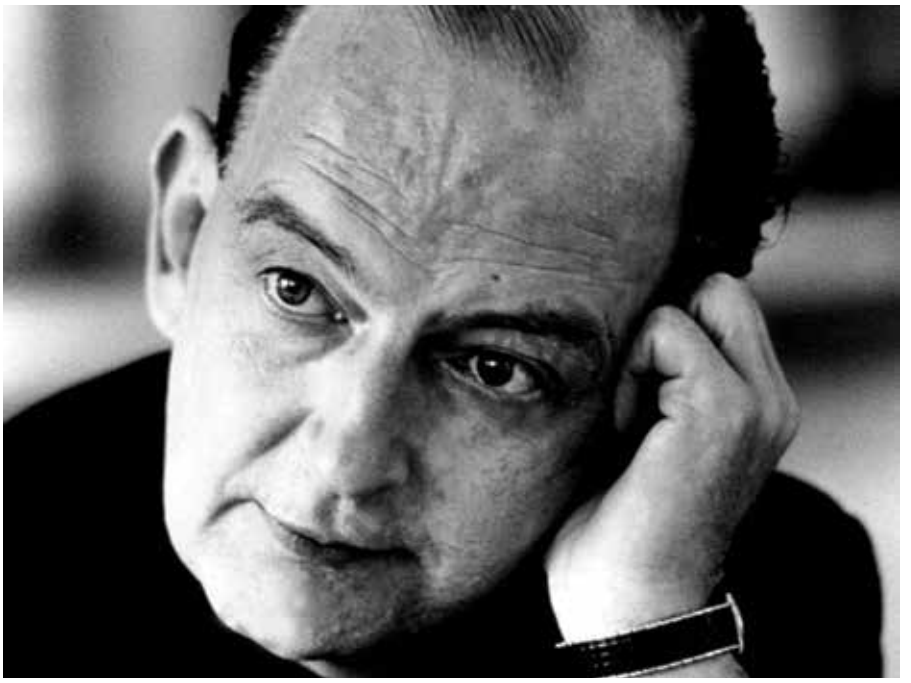
On the other hand, Joaquin Phoenix is a disaster as Abe Lucas. In the early scenes he falls right into the trap waiting for any actor playing a depressive: he simply walks around, slack-jawed and lumbering, without communicating any of the inner turmoil or projecting the spiritual wreckage that women like Jill have found strangely attractive at least since the time of Lord Byron. (Compare Phoenix's performance in this film with his performance in *Her*, where he makes a neurotic nerd seem quirky, interesting, and unpredictable.) In the post-murder scenes, Phoenix plays Abe as a conventional scumbag, but is conventionality really what Allen had in mind?

Perhaps Allen was able to put this despairing film together so neatly because he no longer has any of the doubts that keep other directors or dramatists from too quickly making up their minds about the meanings and destinations of their stories and characters. He's entitled to his despair (if that's what it is) but it makes this film too much like a machine, its characters more like well-oiled gears than human beings. You leave *Irrational Man* feeling neither elated nor depressed, neither confused nor satisfied nor even ambivalent. You shrug. We used to go to Woody Allen movies for more than that. ■

Matthew Sitman

Reading Left to Right

Richard John Neuhaus
A Life in the Public Square
Randy Boyagoda
Image, $30, 459 pages



Time magazine profiled Richard John Neuhaus in the fall of 1975, just as his book *Time Toward Home* was being published. Neuhaus famously—or infamously, depending on your view—told that publication, "When I meet God, I expect to meet him as an American." The line pithily expresses Neuhaus's abiding preoccupations as an activist and thinker, and serves as the guiding theme of Randy Boyagoda's recent biography, *Richard John Neuhaus: A Life in the Public Square*. The resulting portrait displays an unusually ambitious and politically engaged priest as public intellectual who, if not exactly representative of the times in which he lived, seemed to reflect their deepest conflicts and confusions.

The basics of Neuhaus's story are well known: his childhood as the son of a Lutheran–Missouri Synod minister in rural Ontario; his time as pastor of a racially integrated Lutheran congregation in Brooklyn; his marching for civil rights with Dr. King in the 1960s and his broadsides against the Vietnam War in the '70s; and, eventually, his move to the right, reception into the Roman Catholic Church, founding of the neoconservative magazine *First Things,* and status as an adviser to popes and presidents. Neuhaus's life brimmed with energy and activity, voluminous writing and constant debating, and it's a testament to Boyagoda's skills as a writer that he manages to wrestle all this material into a pleasingly readable narrative. That he also has written two novels comes as no surprise.

It's possible this narrative is too tidy, however. Boyagoda approaches his task with admiration and sympathy for Neuhaus while never slipping into outright hagiography. Still, I couldn't shake the feeling that Boyagoda occasionally treated his subject too gently.

Boyagoda has no trouble, for example, revealing that Neuhaus exaggerated his relationship with Martin Luther King, Jr., that his early prose could be awful, or that Neuhaus didn't always follow his own advice (taken from the Psalms) to "put not your trust in princes." Yet you have to comb through the footnotes to find out that Neuhaus was a stalwart defender of the serial rapist Fr. Marcial Maciel of the Legionaries of Christ, claiming that he was "morally certain" of Maciel's innocence. I'm not trying to dwell on one rather troubling mistake. I'm wondering why such a spectacular lapse in judgment was deemed unfitting for the main text of his biography. Boyagoda admits that, even after the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith removed Maciel from public ministry in 2006, Neuhaus's acknowledgment of what really happened possessed "far too much convoluted self-justification." A more critical treatment of Neuhaus's life would stop to ask why this was so.

One reason Boyagoda might have relegated Neuhaus's support for Maciel to the footnotes, I suspect, is to avoid the kind of armchair psychoanalysis that is generally absent from the biography. Where did such certainty in Maciel's innocence come from, especially in the midst of the broader Roman Catholic sexual-abuse scandals? Can anything be learned about Neuhaus's cast of mind from the episode? There certainly are good reasons to ask such questions sparingly, and answer them with appropriate modesty, but I would not have minded if Boyagoda made more forays into Neuhaus's inner life than he does. (One can't

help wondering what Boyagoda would have made of the recent revelation that Neuhaus's extensive personal diaries were destroyed on his instruction after his death.)

By "inner life" I do not mean an excuse for idle speculation. I mean how he related to those in power, how he understood authority, why he was drawn to some people and ideas more than to others, and how he handled disagreements and countervailing information. A biographer has earned the right, if anyone has, to make informed judgments in that space where personality seems to lurk behind events. Especially when events prove to be so disastrous. Nearly six years after Neuhaus's death, we can see the wreckage abetted by a peculiar permutation of Christian and neoconservative political advocacy that took great pains to justify preemptive war, defend the death penalty, give American capitalism the imprimatur of papal authority, and, generally, be a reliable if not completely uncritical support for the Republican Party. This baptizing of the neoconservative domestic and foreign-policy agenda proved to be an unambiguous failure. At the height of his influence, Neuhaus aided and abetted a president who left behind a wrecked economy and the carnage of two stalled wars abroad. The scope of the damage done goes beyond the ups and downs of normal politics. You don't really get the sense that this is the case from Boyagoda's biography, though, and Neuhaus's fateful dalliances with the Bush administration are passed off more as trusting the wrong people than as an indictment of Neuhaus's ideas, preoccupations, and temperament.

Neuhaus's move to the right offers similar possibilities for exploration. Boyagoda basically embraces Neuhaus's own explanation for the ideological shift—the left changed more than he did—but the relevant chapter of the biography, "The Lonely Radical Looks Elsewhere," reads a bit thin. (It's just over fifteen pages, and primarily concerns a book, *In Defense of People*, that Boyagoda believes was rightfully panned by reviewers.) Abortion unsurprisingly factors into Neuhaus's evolution, though much remains hazy. Boyagoda argues that *Roe v. Wade* provided one of the "national-political contexts for his ongoing shift from Left to Right," but that doesn't really indicate how often Neuhaus wrote about abortion in the early to mid-1970s, or if it then occupied precisely the same place in his thinking that it did later. Neither Neuhaus's move to the right, nor what that move might reveal about the religious right's contours, are discussed with particular insight or innovation.

Boyagoda's treatment of Neuhaus's eventual conversion to Catholicism is much more interesting, particularly because of the way the biography's early chapters on Neuhaus's adolescence and time at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis seem to anticipate, without heavy-handed foreshadowing, his conversion. In particular, Neuhaus's devotion to his professor Carl Piepkorn, a kind of smells-and-bells Lutheran who understood the confession, in Boyagoda's words, as "a reform movement internal to the universal catholic church," emerges as especially important. This tracing of a kind of intellectual genealogy is superb. Boyagoda relays the formation Neuhaus received at Concordia, the depth of his friendship with the future historian and fellow Catholic convert Robert Louis Wilken, and the broader context of the tensions among Missouri Synod Lutherans. For most readers, this material will be a revelation.

One of the other distinct pleasures of this biography relates to those moments when politics recedes and Neuhaus's more personal, devotional writings come to the fore, especially his reflections on death and dying. Boyagoda does not fail to notice that, toward the end of his life, Neuhaus "took on a more reflective and personal frame in his writing." Whatever criticisms I might have of Neuhaus's religious-political project, the intensity and beauty of his spiritual writing can be deeply moving. I did not fail to be instructed by this book in that regard. As the biography draws to a close, Boyagoda simply gets out of the way and quotes Neuhaus at length. But perhaps Neuhaus's most piercing prose comes from a letter to his friend Wilken, written when he was just twenty-six years old, about an "unwanted" baby boy he saw delivered at King's County Hospital:

> The city and the potential of the civilization it represents—to this I am religiously committed. And to the ways of the God who brought it into being. "What is man, that you keep him in mind?" Little baby boy Washington—fear not, He has redeemed you. He has called you by the name you do not yet have, you are His! I cannot guarantee you that this is true. It may be a pious illusion. But it is better than what is called the truth by men, but just must be illusion. You are not alone.

Looking back on Neuhaus's life, I can't help but wish he'd retained more of that youthful skepticism toward the truths of men. ■

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Joshua Hochschild

Out of Their League

In Defense of a Liberal Education

Fareed Zakaria
W. W. Norton & Company, $23.95, 204 pp.

Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be

An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania
Frank Bruni
Grand Central Publishing, $25, 218 pp.

I wanted to like these books, I really did. I am a liberal-arts dean, and frequently find myself promoting liberal education to prospective students and parents. I work at a very fine institution, with outstanding academic programs, but our reputation is mostly regional and students don't choose us for prestige first. In *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be*, Frank Bruni challenges elitist assumptions about what counts as a worthy education, and Fareed Zakaria's *In Defense of a Liberal Education* defends the usefulness and versatility of the liberal arts. Both books are getting a lot of attention, and it is in my professional interest for their basic claims to be heard and believed. Still, they left me disappointed.

Both books are accessible and clear, written in a journalistic style, combining personal anecdotes and human-interest vignettes with summaries of trends. Both books make a simple and straightforward point. In fact, one wonders whether either thesis needs a book-length treatment. True, many people apparently need to be reminded that you can succeed after graduating from a nonprestigious college, or that liberal education can actually help you later in life. But these are reminders, aren't they, not groundbreaking new claims?

Misperceptions about prestige and the value of liberal education are, at their root, questions about the purpose of education. A mother recently told me that her son didn't major in history because he didn't want to be a history teacher. The remark implies an impoverished understanding of both the career skills and the general human formation that humanistic education can foster. It is difficult to know where to begin responding to her, but she wouldn't get help from Zakaria or Bruni—her problem isn't that she seeks prestige, or that she thinks only STEM fields are important.

Many defenders of liberal education would want to respond to the mother by defending the value of the history major "for its own sake," and condemn the pre-professional instrumentalization of the liberal arts. ("Doesn't that mother want her son to lead a meaningful life, not just be a cog in the economic machine?") But that isn't an adequate response. I don't doubt that the mother wants her son to lead a meaningful life—maybe she just does not expect history professors to be authorities on what makes life meaningful. But even more basic and troubling, the mother didn't see the potentially useful—and yes, employable—skills that her son could have learned from studying history.

It isn't a problem that the primary concern of many parents and students is finding a job after graduation. It is a problem that they have such an impoverished understanding of what kinds of activities can make one employable, and what else might be included in the return on investment of a college education.

This highlights something important about how Bruni and Zakaria conceive of their audience. Neither Bruni nor Zakaria are concerned with the role that education can play in finding a meaningful life. They take for granted that their audience is not seeking meaning. Nor are they writing for parents worried about their children getting a job. They're writing for parents worried about their children getting the *right* job. Their concern is more than financial stability and less than a noble life: it is, plain and simple, social standing. The audience for these books is not the wider consumers of college education as a whole, but cosmopolitan elites, anxious about success among their peers. Bruni's book aims to assuage guilt and temper mania about the role of status in education. Zakaria's book aims to remind the power elite of the undervalued mojo of liberal education.

This helps make sense of the irony of these claims coming from these authors. Bruni, encouraging parents to look beyond the Ivies, went to Columbia for graduate school. (It is also not incidental that for college he turned down Yale to attend the University of North Carolina.) While Bruni is a solid journalist and a good writer, it is not clear he would have had the career he's had without the Ivy League credential. And some of his arguments are based on the same prestige-consciousness that he's supposedly trying to undermine: his evidence of the worthiness of lesser-known schools is often that they have professors from, and alumni who went on to graduate studies at, Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard or Yale.

Zakaria, who is encouraging people to pursue liberal education, was a history major at Yale but admits he dodged Yale's more substantial, coherent liberal-arts program, Directed Studies. (Full disclosure: I went to Yale a few years after Zakaria graduated, and did the Directed Studies program.) In those days at least, history was a rigorous but popular major among practical-minded Yale students who weren't pursuing the sciences or economics; Yale history majors were commonly hired by consulting firms and investment banks. (Zakaria grew up in India, and the American system of elite schools with paths to social status other than science and math was a bit of a culture shock to him.)

I don't cite these ironies as a form of ad hominem criticism, but only to point out that the authors are members of a class that defines success in a particular way, and they are speaking to others who share that conception of success. Bruni's book offers some valuable life perspective, but how high on the scale of moral urgency is offering consolation to the student or family that didn't get into, or couldn't afford, an Ivy League school? Zakaria's book will for a while put a stop to, or at least qualify, smug remarks by politicians and pundits about the superiority of STEM fields—but how valuable is a defense of liberal education that does nothing to challenge the reigning notions of success?

It's good to disabuse the ruling class of its delusions, but let's not confuse that exercise with searching reflection on the purpose and value of education. Both Bruni and Zakaria show that a rhetoric tailored to elites is actually quite base. They appeal to what Plato would have called the oligarchic temperament, seeking to feed the appetites for wealth, power, and security. Bruni does notice the force of upper-middle-class insecurity and shame; but instead of redirecting his audience to a nobler sense of honor, he simply offers them a different strategy for getting what they want: worldly success.

Zakaria's rhetoric is even more base—democratic in the pejorative, Platonic sense, appealing only to popular concerns. True, he draws on language that suggests the more elevated, reasoning part of the soul, but he is not directing his audience toward wisdom, only security and control. I was struck that his book begins with a quotation from E. O. Wilson: "We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom." When I read that first sentence, I wondered why Zakaria hadn't gone straight to T. S. Eliot, whose juxtaposition of information and wisdom (and knowledge) is more famous. Then I read on, and saw why. Wilson continues: "The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers, people able to put together the

right information at the right time, think critically about it, and make important choices wisely." This point isn't about wisdom, but about power. "The world will be run…" Making choices "wisely" isn't about the difference between wisdom and information; it's about being the kind of information-processor who can rule.

Wilson is right: the world will be run by the synthesizers. Acknowledging that, however, does not make for a very robust defense of liberal education. What is missing from both authors is any genuinely inspiring rhetoric for higher education, particularly liberal education. Rather than reorder the soul to point toward higher things, we take for granted that education is to help us get the things we already want. If elites can't distinguish the shame of not keeping up with the Joneses from the shame of a dishonorable life, perhaps they deserve to suffer in restless dissatisfaction. If "critical thinking" isn't oriented toward seeking truth and attaining wisdom, then it is nothing more noble than a way to exercise power over others.

These two books will no doubt correct some misconceptions, and they may, inadvertently, help raise the question they don't ask directly: What is the purpose of education? What disappoints me most is that Bruni and Zakaria are both so sharply attuned to, and uninterested in challenging, the tastes and values of the ruling class. From the evidence of these books, that class is not interested in asking the question of the purpose of education, and—what is more depressing—their tastes and values are shallow. Such tastes do not need to be confirmed and made more effective; they need to be chastised and redirected.

As for the wider public, especially the vast middle class with more basic concerns about a future for their children, they will be little moved by these books. Perhaps that is a sign of hope. They do not share the anxieties and prejudices of the elite, and many of them are already more receptive when offered a more elevated, inspiring vision of collegiate education—such as that offered by religious schools, Great Books programs, and a classical curriculum. (I note that utilitarian Common Core standards were imposed by the ruling elite, and the strongest objections to them have come from the middle class.)

Simple truths, isolated from other truths, miss important nuances. Yes, prestige is a poor proxy for educational quality; but campus culture does matter, and for better or worse prestige is one ingredient in campus culture. (Once we realize that, we can begin to inquire about what the other ingredients are.) Yes, the liberal arts can be very useful, but not all liberal-arts education is equal—some fields and some approaches are more intellectually rigorous, spiritually satisfying, and socially beneficial than others. (Once we realize that, we can begin to discern the most worthy manifestations of liberal-arts education.) Yes, students get out of college what they put into it, but there is a lot of luck and serendipity too, and students aren't crazy for seeking to be in a place with more opportunity, or for wondering how their curricular choices will affect their development. (Once we realize that, we can ask about professors and a core curriculum, and not just about majors.)

Bruni and Zakaria are writing for an audience of elites. Ironically, a book that aimed at a wider audience might be more truly "aristocratic" in the Platonic sense. Such a book would assume that there is such a thing as a noble life, and it would suggest that nobility might not perfectly conform to worldly success. The mother who misunderstood the opportunities of a history major is under no illusion that her son will become part of the ruling class. But in addition to hoping he finds a job, she certainly wants him to live well. In that sense, the Platonic aristocratic approach is more truly democratic, acknowledging the potential of any person to live a noble life. Truly helpful books about college and liberal education would speak to the deeply human desire for this kind of life. They would thereby challenge the prevailing idea of success. ■

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David Michael

The Arab Had a Name

The Meursault Investigation

Kamel Daoud
Translated by John Cullen
Other Press, $14.95, 143 pp.

Several years ago, I found myself on the beachside terrace of a hotel bar sitting across from one of my relatives, a middle-aged man who, as he never fails to mention, was a philosophy major two decades ago. Rants were an indulgence he frequently paired with martinis, rants that usually started with high tax rates and ended with a lament about the absurdity of the world. That it was his wedding night made no difference: "Have you read *The Stranger*? A brilliant book! That's what I'm talking about—the absurdity of life!"

This strikes me as the typical American idea of *The Stranger*. Most often read in high school or college, when philosophical justifications for rebellion are most appealing, the book is usually thought of and described as a French philosophical novel. If one described it as an Algerian book about a murder, most American readers would knit their brows. In the Algerian imagination, however, *The Stranger* and its author, Albert Camus, both cut a far more complex figure. Speaking for his fellow Algerians, the writer Kamel Daoud recently remarked, "[*The Stranger*] is a philosophical novel, but we're incapable of reading it as anything other than a colonial novel." In *The Meursault Investigation*, recently translated from the French, Daoud works out the complexities of this Algerian response to Camus' classic novel.

The premise of *The Meursault Investigation* is that *The Stranger* is a true story, written by its narrator, Meursault, from prison. Set at a bar in Oran, *The Meursault Investigation* is written as a monologue delivered by an old man named Harun and addressed to an unnamed French student—a scenario borrowed from another Camus novel, *The Fall*. Over the course of several nights, Harun, now an old man, recounts the other side of that famous 1942 murder when a nameless victim was shot down on a hot Algerian beach.

"There's something I find stunning," Harun says, "and it's that...nobody at all ever tried to find out what the victim's name was.... Everyone was knocked out

CLAUDE TRUONG-NGOC

Kamel Daoud

by the perfect prose." Camus—whose journalism was certainly sympathetic to the plight of Algeria's indigenous Muslim population under French colonial rule—may have intended the victim's namelessness to signify Meursault's complete isolation. But in *The Meursault Investigation*, the question becomes whether *The Stranger* and its narrator treat the victim as a disposable prop. "My brother's name was Musa," Harun says, "But he'll remain 'the Arab' forever."

The first half of the book tells Musa's story. It reads as a straightforward response to *The Stranger* and an indictment of Meursault and the French colonialism he represents. While Meursault became famous for his telling of the story, Harun's family withered. His mother—long since abandoned by her husband—is distant and resentful. Although Harun did not know his brother well, his childhood is defined by Musa's murder: "Mama transmitted me her fears, and Musa his corpse. What could a teenager do, trapped like that between death and the mother?" Like Meursault's mother in *The Stranger*, Harun's mother is an underdeveloped presence in the background of this novel, but Daoud employs her to good effect as a symbol for Algeria, an unstable motherland whose identity remains bound to the injustices of its colonial past.

Harun claims to have memorized *The Stranger*, and as a reader he is sardonic, astute, and obsessed. Much of his early monologue is spent dismantling the idea of Meursault as an anti-hero: "what in fact was never anything other than a banal score settling that got out of hand was elevated to a philosophical crime." Even so, he esteems Meursault for his skill as a writer: "That's your hero's genius: he describes the world as if he's going to die at any moment, as if he has to choose his words with an economy of breathing."

In place of Meursault's urgent economy, there is a lurching quality to Harun's manner of expression. The reader experiences the thrilling unease of being cornered in a bar by a chatty drinker who is revealing too much. Yet there are strong linguistic and narrative parallels between the two stories. Harun peppers his tale with Meursault's words. Sometimes he overtly steals. The famous first words of *The Stranger* are "Mother died today"; the first words of *The Meursault Investigation* are "Mama's still alive today." At other times, it seems as if Harun is doomed to recapitulate the book that haunts him. Halfway through, he discloses that he, too, has murdered someone: he killed an innocent Frenchman whom he found hiding outside the family's house the night after Algerian liberation—twenty years after his brother's death. When Meursault fired his fatal shot, "it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness." When Harun fired, "It was like two sharp raps on the door of deliverance." Though Harun tries to frame his killing as the opposite of Meursault's, he can't help borrowing Meursault's language; here, and elsewhere, he seems to idolize Meursault in spite of himself.

The parallels between the two narrators extend well beyond their crimes. The second half of *The Meursault Investigation* casts Harun as a "stranger" to an Algeria increasingly under the influence of Islamic fundamentalists. Whereas Meursault's quarrel with God was personal, Harun's is societal. "Religion is public transportation I never use," he remarks. "Centuries ago, I might have been burned alive for my convictions, and for the empty red wine bottles found in the neighborhood dumpsters. Nowadays, people just avoid me."

In his review of *The Stranger*, Sartre commented, "The stranger [Camus] wants to portray is precisely one of those terrible 'idiots' who shock society by not accepting the rules of its game.... And we ourselves, who, on opening the book are not yet familiar with the feeling of the absurd, vainly try to judge him according to our usual standards." In other words, Meursault is the ultimate Other, an idiot in the original sense of the word: someone who stands outside, if not against, the community. But in the seventy-five years since *The Stranger* was published, it has earned a massive readership, and so Meursault has become less the Other than an existential Everyman. That is why Harun insists that Musa is the real Other in *The Stranger*—the victim never given a voice or a name, a "brief Arab, technically ephemeral, who lived for two hours and has died incessantly for seventy years, long after his funeral." The essential irony in *The Meursault Investigation* is that, as a character and a speaker, Harun ends up reminding us of Meursault rath-

er than of the brother he would honor. Because he never had Musa to teach him how to speak, he borrows Meursault's voice—an overbearing voice that won't stop proclaiming its own otherness. The one who remains nameless in Daoud's book is, in fact, the voiceless French student at the bar listening to this endless rant, a stand-in for the reader. Thus, after a long diatribe about returning Musa's name to him, Harun says to his listener, with unintended irony, "No, the first night I always pick up the tab. By the way, what's your name?"

In Algeria, where it was first published, *The Meursault Investigation* was met with strong sales and positive reviews. The following year, it was published in France and shortlisted for the Prix Goncourt, the country's most prestigious literary award. Daoud's success in France was met with suspicion back home. After he appeared on a French television show, where he responded to a question on Islam with critical comments on religion in the Arab world, an Algerian Salafist imam issued a fatwa on Facebook calling for Daoud's execution. In America, where most readers have little knowledge of the complicated colonial history so central to Daoud's book, the incident made headlines.

The Meursault Investigation is an impressive work. Reading it for the first time is more stimulating than reading *The Stranger* a second time. It is unfortunate that much of the book's American publicity has to do with the reaction against Daoud in Algeria and not with the considerable literary merit of the novel itself. "Here is one of our own," we seem to want to say of Daoud, "an enlightened, liberal hero in the midst of absurdity," just like Harun. Perhaps. Or perhaps we are too ignorant of the Algerian situation to offer a more sophisticated appraisal. Like Meursault, we remain unable to name the Arab. ■

David Michael *is a writer and film producer. His essays and reviews have appeared in the* New Republic, Virginia Quarterly Review, *the* Paris Review Daily, *and* Books & Culture, *among others. He lives in Brooklyn.*

Nicholas Clifford

Walking Toward Freedom

The Barefoot Lawyer

A Blind Man's Fight for Justice and Freedom in China

Chen Guangcheng

Henry Holt and Co., $30, 330 pp.

The term "barefoot lawyer" echoes that of the "barefoot doctors," whose rudimentary medical training in Mao's China was able to bring at least some elements of health care to an impoverished countryside. "Barefoot lawyers," on the other hand, are those who have acquired some knowledge of the law by themselves, and have used it to defend rural Chinese against the depredations of officialdom. These can take many forms of course, including illegal taxes and land seizures, or looking the other way as factories, refineries, mills, and so forth pollute China's air and waters, sometimes destroying rivers and lakes, often spreading disease as they do so. Chen Guangcheng's start as an activist came when a large new paper mill, near his poor village of Dongshigu in Shandong Province, managed to make useless the river that had earlier provided water for drinking, bathing, and irrigation. Protests led nowhere, but Chen's energy and ingenuity helped gain a British grant enabling the village to sink a well to bring it fresh water.

Chen Guangcheng

Despite being blinded for life by an illness at the age of two, Chen had managed to educate himself sufficiently to become a thorn in the side of the establishment, as he came to realize the enormous gap between the promises of state and party constitutions about people's rights and the actual practices of officials. His readiness to air his grievances in the media, both foreign and (where possible) Chinese, made him an object of suspicion to the authorities, and his appearance on the cover of *Newsweek International* in 2002 and his participation in a State Department–sponsored month-long visit to the United States in 2003 only made matters worse.

That visit also introduced him to Jerome Cohen at NYU Law School, one of the pioneers of the study of Chinese law in this country. By then Chen had married an enterprising young woman from a neighboring village (against her parents' wishes). It was roughly then that his interest in human rights led him into protesting the widespread practices of enforced abortions and sterilizations that, in some places, had become routine under China's Family Planning Law. The West knows this as the "one-child policy," though that is a bit of a misnomer since there are several exceptions to it—for national minorities (i.e., non-Han Chinese) and, of course, for those rich and influential enough to avoid it. Chen's attempt to bring a legal case on behalf of a friend in Dongshigu brought pressure from local officials, but far worse was his ability to publicize government wrongdoing not only beyond his village, but beyond China itself. In 2005 the *Washington Post* ran a story about Chen and about the iniquities of forced family planning. That led to Chen's kidnapping, torture,

trial, and a sentence of over four years in jail, and even after he'd served that and was returned to Dongshigu, he and his family were kept under house arrest.

With the help of his courageous and resourceful wife, he eventually managed to escape in 2012, making his way to Beijing and ultimately to the U.S. embassy. As luck would have it, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner were about to arrive for talks. His account of the tense days of discussion and diplomacy that followed is straightforward enough. We are, however, only given Chen's side of the story. According to Chen, American officials, including Clinton herself, were anxious to make a deal with Beijing. They wanted him out of the embassy if the Chinese government would promise to allow him to continue his legal studies in China, free from harassment. Not surprisingly, Chen was reluctant to trust any such agreements. Although he would have preferred to stay in China, he and his immediate family were eventually allowed to leave. Once in the United States, he took up a year's residency, arranged by Jerome Cohen, at NYU Law School.

There the book ends, and no reader could fail to be impressed by Chen's courage (to say nothing of that of his wife) and his willingness to stand by his principles even when arrested and repeatedly beaten. Over and over again he insists that all his actions in China were legitimate under both party and government constitutions, and that it was the officials themselves who violated the law. His view on the weakness of China's civil society and of the state's unwillingness to allow the existence of any organization it does not control is well worth reading (though it's also worth noting that this characteristic long predates the coming of communism).

Sadly enough, Chen's story does not quite end there. He accompanied his departure from NYU in 2013 with unfortunate charges that the university was succumbing to pressure from Beijing because the university was opening a new campus in Shanghai. Today he and his family live in Washington, where he's a visiting scholar at the Catholic University of America. He is also associated with the Witherspoon Institute, a strongly conservative research center in Princeton, New Jersey. But that's another story, and does not in the least diminish the interest of this book. ■

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Bring a Guest

Henry Frank

I recently married a non-Catholic. Kayla joins me for Mass from time to time, bringing with her the perspective of a guest. Her family did not go to church regularly when she was growing up; she never studied Catholic theology, either formally or informally; and she knows few Catholic practices and traditions. But that is exactly what makes her perspective so helpful for a Catholic like me. Even though I've had two years of graduate school in Catholic theology, her questions and comments provide me with something that none of my professors could. She is a *guest* at Mass, and as such she senses not only the beauty of Catholic worship, but also its strangeness.

Kayla came with me to the Easter Vigil last year, and she watched me and the rest of the congregation for the cues to stand, sit, and kneel. When our priest, who likes to joke, concluded the two-and-a-half-hour liturgy by saying, "The Mass is ended, *alleluia*," she burst out laughing, thinking the *alleluia* was another of his jokes. I had to tell her it was not a joke but an exclamation of joy about the feast we celebrated. "Oh, right," she said, "Easter, *alleluia*." But her comment made me realize that the joyous point may have been lost somewhere between the congregation's dampened response of *alleluia* and the staggered beginning of the recessional hymn. For the biggest celebration of the church year, the collective voice of the faithful did not even begin to fill the enormous gothic-style chapel—as my wife had not failed to notice.

2012 Easter Vigil at Nativity of Our Savior Church in Portage, Indiana

CNS PHOTO / MICHAEL MCARDLE, NORTHWEST INDIANA CATHOLIC

Any familiar ritual involves some reflexive responses and gestures, but reflex is one thing, inattention another. Those of us who have gone to Mass our entire lives often find ourselves just going through the motions, responding at the appropriate times with the appropriate words and humming along with the appropriate tunes we know too well. It is not that I am indifferent at Mass, but I am *comfortable* with the way things are. I am familiar with the rituals, and I am disposed toward my regular hour of communal worship in much the same way every week. Kayla's presence goads me to participate in, and think about, the whole thing more intently. Whatever benefits Mass may bring her, I am the beneficiary of her questions and observations. They never fail to challenge the more ossified aspects of my faith.

Kayla's favorite part of the Mass is the Prayer of the Faithful, that brief moment in which we pause to pray for those in need of God's grace. We direct our liturgy, prayer, and focus outward, beyond ourselves. We are the body of Christ, commissioned to care for the world God gives us. I think I knew all that, but the Prayer of the Faithful had never quite captured my imagination before. It does now.

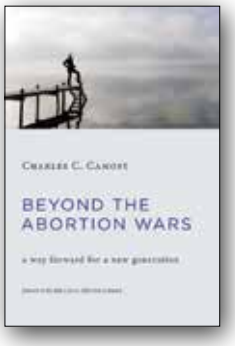
One way to understand the Mass is as a retelling of the Parable of the Great Banquet. Think of that banquet from the perspective of the host. Here he is, midday on a Sunday, let's say, with an empty dining room and a gourmet meal getting cold. Upset that his friends have not come, he invites anyone he can find on the streets—which means mostly the poor who have no meal of their own. In the end, the dining room is full, and the guests have a free meal. But the host has more than this. He has served the feast that Jesus commends in Luke 14—the feast for which he "will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

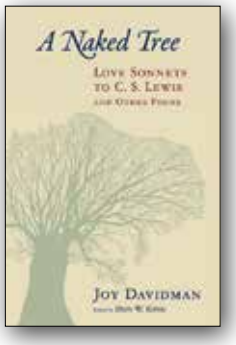
The significance of bringing guests to Mass has deep roots in the Christian tradition. Christ has called us all to be messengers of the Gospel, and the church calls us to be evangelists who continue to be evangelized. At the great banquet, Jesus tells us how the relationship between guest and host is inverted, each serving the other through his or her unique gifts. We Catholics have a beautiful church to offer our friends. And though they may not know when to sit or when to stand, their presence in mind and body has the potential to wake us from spiritual slumber.

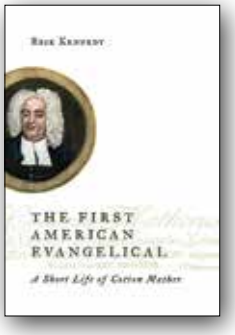
Besides, we have the open seats. ■

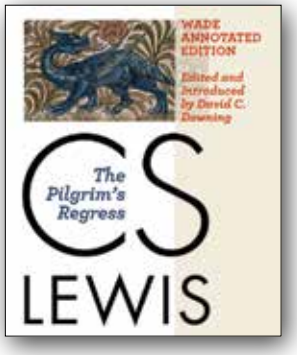
Henry Frank *is a 2014 graduate of Duke Divinity School.*

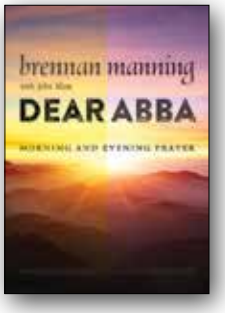
EERDMANS

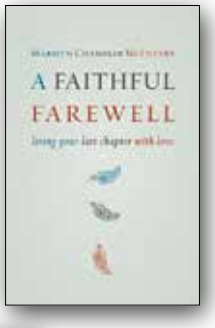


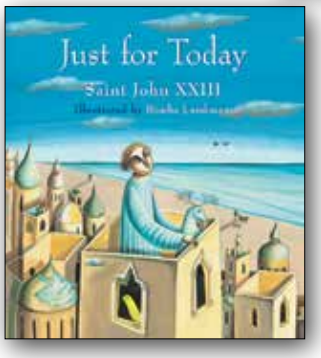


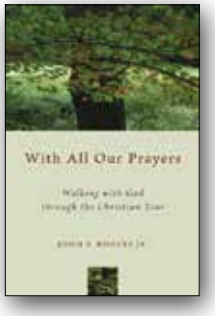


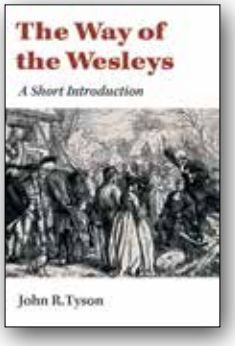


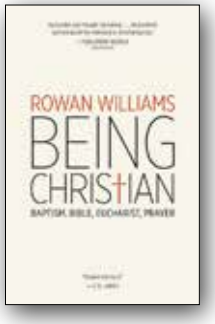












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